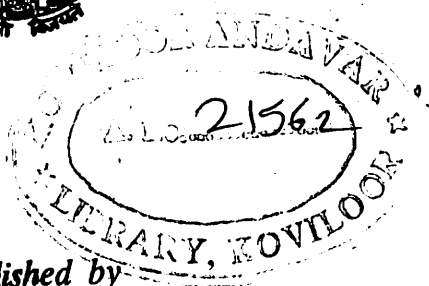
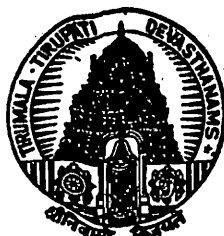


# VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA

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A. SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN

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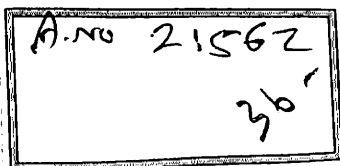
**Sri S. Lakshminarayana I. A. S.,**

Executive Officer

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams

**TIRUPATI**

1985



# **VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA**

*By*

**A. Srinivasa Raghavan**

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## FOREWORD

The beauty of the Visistadvaita lies in its conception of a Godhead of attributes or gunas, whose playground is the entire universe from whom all the animate and inanimate emanate and in whom all merge ultimately. This goes as a compromise between absolute monism of Adi Sankara and the distinctive separation of Deva and Jiva of Ananda Tirtha, the famous Madhvacharya.

Another important aspect is that, if Sankara's Advaita preaches salvation through discard and denial of vices and worldly aspects and realisation of the Godhead through introspection, the Visistadvaita accepts the social obligation of Jiva as 'Dehin' and teaches the way to be away from the phenomenal world but to live within it, by surrendering the fruits of action at the Feet of that Supreme Bliss manifested in the form of Srimannarayana. The concept of Godhead with attributes in a way paved the way for a better socio-ethical approach and made the religion more acceptable to common man.

It is, therefore, no wonder if the concept of Visistadvaita like that of Advaita, had been appealing to the Hindu society from times immemorial.

This is only the periphery of the vast ocean of the Divine Ambrosia. But Sri A.S. Raghavan, the venerable author who delved deep into this unique philosophy presents it to the theistic public in a delightful manner.

T. T. Devasthanams hopes that the book would be received well.

TIRUPATI

1-8-1985

S. LAKSHMINARAYANA, I. A. S.,

*Executive Officer*

T. T. Devasthanams





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## PROLEGOMENA

*trayyantaiḥ eka-kaṇṭhaiḥ tad-anuṅa-  
manu vyāsamukhyoktibhiśca,  
Śrīman nārāyaṇo naḥ paṭirakhila  
tanuḥ muktido muktabhogyah*

(Paradevatā Pāramarthyadhikāra—*Rahasyatrayasāra* of Śrī Vedānta Deśika)

It is declared by all the Upanishads in one voice, and by Manu, Vyāsa and other sages that follow the Upanishads, that

(1) Nārāyaṇa, the consort of Śrī, is our Lord, who has all (beings and things) as His body;

(2) He gives the Mokṣa or release from bondage; and

(3) He is the object of the blissful enjoyment for those who have attained Mokṣa.

This gives in a nut-shell the fundamental doctrines of our philosophy known as Viśiṣṭādvaita, which from time immemorial has been handed down through unbroken spiritual tradition, and which in mediaeval age has been promulgated by Bhagavān Śrī Rāmānuja with great devotion and fervour and which is being taught to us by our Ācāryas even today.

The name Viśiṣṭādvaita shows that it is neither pure Dvaita, nor pure Advaita. The Dvaita philosophy promulgated by Śrī Ānanda Tīrtha (Madhvācārya) teaches that Hari is greater than the great, that the Jīvas are real and that they are absolutely distinct from Hari. The Advaita philosophy propounded by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya holds that Brahman is the only true really-existing Being and all the rest are illusory. Viśiṣṭādvaita teaches that the sentient souls (jīvas) and the non-sentient objects (acetana) are as real as Brahman, but both of them are only a mode (*i.e.*, a Viśeṣaṇa or an attribute) of the Parabrahman and are not independent of the Brahman as the Dvaitins hold. Brahman is the Supreme Godhead without a second, and it has innumerable and auspicious qualities and attributes, and not nirguṇa or nirviśeṣa (devoid of all attributes) as the Advaitins say. So this philosophy goes by the name of Viśiṣṭādvaita which can be translated in

English as Pan-organismal Monism. This term has been coined and given currency by the great philosopher Prof. P. N. Srinivasacharya and we shall adopt it in preference to 'Qualified Monism' which was in vogue before.

Now we shall explain the significance of the several words of the verse quoted above and then proceed to deal with the ideas imbedded therein in some detail as separate topics under different headings.

*trayvantaiḥ ekakaṇṭhaiḥ*— "By all the Upanishads in one voice". This phrase gives us the *pramāṇa* (the means of valid knowledge) by which Brahman is known. The three Vedas—Rig, Yajus and Śāma, are the Trayī and the Upanishads are their crown, the *trayyanta*. The Upanishads are many and they speak about Brahman. The first part of the Vedas known as Karmakāṇḍa describes the sacrifices and their performance, the object of which is the propitiation of Brahman directly or through other Gods as intermediaries. The second and the last part is known as Jñānakāṇḍa and it teaches the true nature of Paramātmā, of Jivātmā and of the world and therefore forms the source for all theistic systems of Indian Philosophy. There appear to be some contradictions in the Upanishads, but they are only apparent and may be easily reconciled. Properly interpreted, all the Upanishads proclaim in one voice the same truth about God and the world.

*tad-ānuṣṭhāna-manu-vyāsa-mukhyoktibhīṣca*.— The teachings of the Upanishads are explained and co-ordinated by the writings of the sages like Manu and Vyāsa who follow the path of the Vedas. So the works of these sages also are sources of valid knowledge. The *smṛtis*, written by Manu, Yājñavalkya and other sages, describe and prescribe the rites and rituals for the worship of the gods and the God of gods and are therefore said to expound the Karmakāṇḍa of the Vedas. They also lay down the laws—moral, ethical and social to be observed by people under different categories according to their birth, equipment or capacity.

Vyāsa, Parāśara and other sages have given us the Purāṇas which explain the profound and subtle thoughts of the Upanishads—the Jñānakāṇḍa of the Vedas. Vyāsa is specially mentioned here as his is the greatest gift and service to humanity. He has written the *Mahābhārata*, which is called the Fifth Veda and

the *Brahma Sūtras* which lay down the rule of interpreting the Upanishads in a scientific manner.

The Ālvārs or the Mystic Saints occupy an important position in the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita. The songs which are the outpourings of the divine ecstasy of these God-mad mystics are accepted as authorities equal in validity to the Vedas. We may say their songs are a bit nearer to us as they depict God when He came amidst us in His incarnations. The language chosen by them is Tamil and so the appeal is strong and personal. It is because of the unique position that the Ālvārs and their songs occupy in this system that Viśiṣṭādvaita is often referred to as Ubhaya Vedānta—one Vedānta seen through two eyes, viz., Sanskrit and Tamil. The cult of the Ubhaya Vedānta, therefore, is peculiar to Viśiṣṭādvaita and is not found in any other system.

The sum and substance of all that is taught by all these pramāṇas is given by the second line of the verse quoted in the beginning. It mentions three things, a knowledge of which is said to be necessary for a person who wants to do what is good to himself and to all, here and hereafter. They are: 1. Tattva (the Reality); 2. Hita (the means to the end); 3. (Puruṣārtha) goal of all aspirations and endeavour.

The Tattva is Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, who is our Lord and who has all as His body.

Śrīman—nārāyaṇa has Śrī as His Consort. The Puruṣa Sūkta which teaches that Puruṣa is the cause of the entire creation concludes by proclaiming that Śrī Devi is His Consort. The conclusion is—Śrī and Nārāyaṇa, the Divine Couple, are the cause of the Universe (Jagatkāraṇa).

Nārāyaṇa—nārāyaṇa is the name proper and the proper name of Viṣṇu and it is pregnant with meanings which establish His superiority over all other things. 'Nara', the first part of the word means sentient beings, and also auspicious qualities.

'Ayana', the second part, means the supporter. Therefore the word 'Nārāyaṇa' denotes the God who is the supporter of all things and the repository of innumerable auspicious qualities. God is Nārāyaṇa who is ever inseparable from Lakṣmī and His essential nature is infinite bliss and infinite knowledge.

*Naḥ patiḥ*—Our Lord. This phrase denotes that the Divya Dampatī—the Divine Couple—are together our Lord for whose purpose and glorification alone all others live, move and have their being.

*Akhila-tanuḥ*—Śrīman Nārāyaṇa has all beings and things as His Body (śarīra) and He is the Soul (Ātma). This relationship of Body and Soul—śarīra-ātma-bhāva as it is called—is peculiar to our philosophy and distinguishes it from all other systems. In fact the *Brahma Sūtras* of Vyāsa Bhagavān are known as Śārīraka Śāstra, because they teach Brahman as the Soul of all—the sentient beings and the non-sentient things. Thus the tattvas are three: cetana, acetana and Īśvara.

The knowledge of the Tattvas, to be fruitful, must lead one to adopt the means or the upāya. That upāya is denoted by the next word—muktidaḥ—the grantor of Mokṣa. Śrīman Nārāyaṇa—the Divine Couple alone can bestow the highest Puruṣārtha, viz., Mokṣa. To earn Their Grace and favour, several ways are prescribed which are known as Karmayoga, Jñānayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Prapatti. A practice of one or other of these upāyas, which are only mediate, will bring us Their grace which alone is the direct means of all human ends, including Mokṣa.

That the Divya Dampatī are the Supreme goal or Puruṣārtha is denoted by the last word in verse, mukta-bhogyāḥ. It means Nārāyaṇa and Śrī are again the object of the blissful enjoyment of those who have attained Mokṣa—an enjoyment which finds its fruition in eternal service to the Divine Couple.

To conclude, the verse given at the outset states that the Upanishads and the works of the Sages who follow them teach us that the Paratattva (the Supreme Reality), Paramahita (the greatest means) and Paramapuruṣārtha (the highest goal) are the Divya Dampatī—Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa.



# I THE TATTVAS

## A. Acetana Tattva

### 1. Prakṛti

In the Prolegomena we saw that the acquisition of the knowledge that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is the Tattva, Hita and Puruṣārtha is the end of all learning.

Now we shall proceed to know something about the Tattvas.

*Prakṛtyātma bhrāntiḥ galati cidacid-lakṣaṇadhiyā  
Tathā jīveśaikya prabhṛtikalahastadvibhajanāt,  
Ato bhoktā bhogyam tadubhaya niyanteti nigamaiḥ  
Vibhaktam naḥ tattvatrayam upadiśanti akṣatadhiyaḥ*

—Rahasyatraya Śāra.

Tattvatrayachintana adhikāra.

[The delusion that the ātma (soul) is nothing but the body (prakṛti) disappears when one has a knowledge of the distinctive features of sentient beings and non-sentient objects. So also the disputes on such questions as the identity of the Jīva and Īśvara will no longer continue when the characteristic features of the two are learnt. Our Ācāryas, possessed of faultless learning, teach us about the existence of the three realities (Tattvas) classified in the Śāstras as

1. Bhoktā (the souls that experience and enjoy);
2. Bhogyam (the objects that are experienced and enjoyed);  
and
3. Īśvara (He who rules over both of them)]

Śrī Deśika succinctly states in this verse that there are two delusions which are haunting the mind of a man in bondage in this world and their removal alone will make him god-minded and godly; and they are:

1. The delusion that the body is itself the Ātmā; and
2. The delusion that the Ātmā is itself the Īśvara (Supreme God).

If one understands the essential nature of the body which is non-sentient and the Ātmā which is sentient, the first delusion will be destroyed; and if he understands the essential nature of the Ātmā embodied and Īśvara the Supreme Controller, the second delusion will be dispelled. So to get over this delusion and the bondage in Saṁsāra, one must acquire a knowledge of the Three Tattvas; viz., Acetana, Cetana and Īśvara.

The Acetana is a substance which is devoid of knowledge (caitanya). It cannot know a thing, nor can act of its own accord, nor enjoy the fruits of such action. This acetana tattva is of three kinds—Triguṇa (Prakṛti—inanimate Matter), Kāla—Time, and Śuddha Sattva (—the unalloyed and self-luminous sattva). If we get a clear knowledge of the Prakṛti with its three guṇas which is said to evolve into twentyfour tattvas, it will help us understand the nature of Jīva who is the twentyfifth and so is over and above the twentyfour tattvas. A study of the nature of Kāla (Time) will bestow on us a knowledge of the evanescent nature of the things here, create a thirst for things which are beyond the sway of Time, and also induce us to do in time what a wise man should do here and now to get redemption. A study of the Śuddha Sattva, the third kind of Acetana, is necessary and useful to know the things pertaining to Īśvara who is at once our prāpaka and prāpya (means and goal).

### *Triguṇa (Prakṛti or Primordial Matter)*

Now about the Triguṇa amongst the three Acetanas (non-sentient objects). Triguṇa is called as such, because of the three guṇas which are in it. It is responsible for concealing the nature of Bhagavān from the bound souls and drawing them towards itself. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the three guṇas. Of these Sattva is the guṇa which is conducive to right knowledge and happiness, and when predominant, works up for the release of the souls in bondage. Rajas is responsible for attachment and sorrow in men, whereas Tamas is the cause of lethargy and sleep. When these three guṇas are evenly balanced, it is the period of the great deluge (mahāpralaya). But when they are uneven and one is predominant and the other two subsidiary, then it is the beginning of creation and Prakṛti undergoes modifications into *mahan* and the like. Prakṛti (matter) is constantly subject to modification (*pariṇāma*).

At the time of deluge there is a succession of similar and identical modifications when Prakṛti is known as *avyakta*, (Unmanifest), whereas during creations it undergoes dissimilar modifications which are known as *vyakta* (Manifest). This *vyakta* is classified by the Śāstras as twentythree tattvas, beginning with *Mahat* and ending with *Pṛthvī*. The region of Prakṛti which is not modified and the region which has been modified are compared respectively to a sea motionless in one place and full of waves in some other place

### *Period of Creation*

When there are dissimilar modifications and therefore the creation begins, the first thing evolved is known as *Mahat*. It is this *Mahat* that helps the *Ātmā* take a decision about a thing. It is also known as *Buddhi* or Intellect. This is again classified as *Sāttvika*, *Rājasa* or *Tāmasa* according to the predominance respectively of the three qualities *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*.

Out of this is born another *Tattva* known as *Ahaṁkāra* which derives its name because of its influence over the *Manas* that makes one mistake the body which is non-*ātma* to be *ātma*. This *Ahaṁkāra* also is of three kinds, viz., *Sāttvika ahaṁkāra* known as *Vaikārika*, *Rājasa ahaṁkāra* known as *Taijasa*, and *Tāmasa ahaṁkāra* known as *Bhūtādi*. The *Rājasa ahaṁkāra* helps the other two *ahaṁkāras* in the process of their modification. Helped by it the *Sāttvika ahaṁkāra* generates the *Indriyas*—the sense-organs.

The *Indriyas* can be classified under two heads as *bāhya* (external) and *āntara* (internal). *Manas* (mind) is the internal sense-organ. It is because of this that we are able to do the function of willing and remembering and because of this again that the outer sense-organs are able to function. This *manas* again assumes different names according to the several functions it performs. It is known as *Buddhi* when it helps us to arrive at a decision, as *Citta* when it helps us think, and *Ahaṁkāra* when it causes *abhimāna* (attachment). The *Manas* is a very important sense-organ as it leads to bondage when attached to things earthly and leads to salvation when attached to proper things being drawn away from worldly things.

The outer sense-organs are ten in number and they are divided into two groups of five each, known as karmendriyas (the senses of action) and jñānendriyas (the senses of knowledge). The five karmendriyas and their functions are: (1) Vāk (sense of speech) for speaking; (2) pāṇi (hand) for grasping; (3) pāda (foot) for movement; (4) pāyu (sense of evacuation) for expelling urine and other such filthy matter; (5) upastha (sense of generation) for purposes of enjoyment. The Jñānendriyas and their functions are: (1) srotra (ear) for hearing; (2) tvak (skin) for touching; (3) cakṣuḥ (eye) for seeing; (4) rasanā (tongue) for tasting; and (5) ghrāṇa (nose) for smelling. These five indriyas derive their nourishment respectively from the five bhūtas (elements) ākāśa, vāyu, tejas, jala, and prthvī (ether, air, fire, water and earth).

These pañca mahā bhūtas (five elements) take their origin from Tāmasa ahaṁkāra which is helped by Rājasa ahaṁkāra with the five Tanmātras (subtle elements) as intermediaries. The nature of the five Tanmātras is very much like the semi-solid state of milk in the process of its change from the liquid state of milk to the solid state of curd. The names of the five Tanmātras are: (1) śabdatanmātra, (2) sparśa tanmātra, (3) rūpa tanmātra, (4) rasa tanmātra and (5) gandha tanmātra. This process of evolution beginning with Prakṛti (Primordial Matter) and ending with Pṛthvi (Earth) is known as the Samaṣṭi Sṛṣṭi (Primary creation) and with that the evolution of the Twenty-four Tattvas is complete and any further modification does not add to the number of the Tattvas. The twenty-four Tattvas are: Prakṛti, Mahat, Ahaṁkāra, Manas, Five senses of Action, Five senses of knowledge, Five tanmātras (Subtle elements) and Five Mahabhūtas (gross elements). The samaṣṭi sṛṣṭi or the evolving of the twenty-four tattvas may be compared to the stocking of slaked lime, sand and other building materials for the construction of a mansion.

After that comes the Vyāṣṭi sṛṣṭi (secondary creation) which is like the mixing up of these materials in proper proportion to begin the construction. The first act in this process is known as Pañcīkaraṇa or quintuplication. This is effected in the following manner: each one of the five mahabhūtas is divided into two halves. Keeping aside one half, the other half in each of the elements is divided into four parts. With one half of each bhūta kept aside, a quarter of the other half of the other four bhūtas is

mixed so as to have in every bhūta one half of itself and four one-eighth parts of the other four bhūtas. After this process of Pañcīkaraṇa (quintuplication), ākāśa will have fifty per cent of the original ākāśa and 12½ per cent of each of the other four bhūtas, viz., Vāyu, Tejas, Jala and Pṛthvī. Vāyu will have 50 per cent of Vāyu element and 12½ per cent of each of the other four elements. The same will be the case with Tejas, Jala and Pṛthvī. Though all the elements may thus have parts of all the elements, still an element gets the name of ākāśa, vāyu etc. because of the major part of that particular element in it. All the objects in this world are known as pāñcabhautika as they are made up of the five elements and are known as Prākṛta, as Prakṛti is the ultimate cause.

Out of these twentyfour Tattvas, Prakṛti, Mahat, Ahaṁkāra, and Pañcabhūtas are known as the upādāna kāraṇa (material cause) for the body of all beings, while the eleven sense-organs which are infinite in number find a place in the body of every being and are much like the sparkling gems set in a jewel. Thus we see that the bodies of all beings consist of these twentyfour tattvas.

We shall conclude with a note on the definition of the body according to our Siddhānta. All beings, we know, possess bodies; but the body of a human being is different from that of an animal, and the body of an animal from that of a bird or a serpent and the body of a bird again differs from that of a tree or a creeper. So we must arrive at a definition of the body which will be applicable to all these objects. Ātmā or Śarīrin is so called because it is always the supporter (*ādhāra*) and controller (*niyantā*) of another and it uses it for its own satisfaction (*śeṣi*). The śarīra is so called by reason of its being in its entirety the *ādheya* (which is supported), the *niyāmya* (which is controlled), and *śeṣa* (which is used for the other's satisfaction). It is inseparable from the śarīrin and forms its mode (*prakāra*) or inseparable attribute (*apṛthak siddha viśeṣaṇa*). Any substance which a sentient self can completely control and support for its own purposes and which stands to the self in an entirely dependent relation is called its śarīra. All sentient and non-sentient beings constitute the śarīra of Paramātmā, for they live, move and have their being in Him and exist for his satisfaction and glorification. The Jīvātma is both śarīra and śarīrin as it ensouls its body and is ensouled by its inner Ruler.

## 2. *Kāla* = (Time) and *Śuddha Sattva*

Of the three tattvas that are acetana (non-sentient), *Kāla* or time is the second. *Kāla* is a substance which is eternal and infinite. It is eternal, because there was no time when time did not exist, nor will there be any time when it will not exist. It is infinite as there is no place where it does not exist. It is devoid of the three guṇas *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* which are found in *Prakṛti* (Primordial Matter). How then, it may be asked, do they speak of *Kāla* as being *Sāttvika*, *Rājasa* or *Tāmasa*? These qualities exist only in the beings which exist in time and from those beings the qualities are loosely spoken of as pertaining to *Kāla* itself.

Time has its own several divisions beginning with *nimeṣa* (winking of an eye or a second) and going up to *yuga*. *Kāṣṭhā* is about two seconds; thirty *kāṣṭhās* make one *kalā*; a *muhūrta* consists of 48 minutes or two *ghaṭikās*. Then we have the day, month, *R.itu*, (season), *Ayana*, (period of six months), year and finally *Yuga*. There are four *yugas*:—*Kṛtayuga*, when *dharma* is in its full measure (four quarters), consists of 17,28,000 years; *Tretā yuga*, when *dharma* is only in three quarters, has 12,96,000 years; *Dvāparayuga*, when *dharma* is only in two quarters, has 8,64,000 years; and the fourth and the last *Kaliyuga*, when only one quarter of *dharma* is prevalent, has 4,32,000 years. Thus there are 4,320,000 years in one *caturyuga*. One thousand such *caturyugas* constitute one day of *Brahmā*, the four-faced creator, and another one thousand one night. Three hundred and sixty five *Brāhmīc* days constitute one year of *Brahmā* and the age of *Brahmā* is one hundred *Brāhmīc* years and it is known as *dvi-parārdha* (i.e., two *parārdhas*). We are said to be in the second *parārdha* of the life of the present *Brahma*—as we say at the time of *Saṅkalpa* before a religious ceremony is begun. One day of *Brahmā* is divided into fourteen *Manvantaras*, each of which consists of nearly seventy-two *caturyugas* and is presided over by one *Manu*. The *Manus* are fourteen in number. We are now in the epoch presided over by *Vaivasvata Manu*.

One month of the human beings is said to be equal to one day of the *Pitṛs* and one year by the human measure to one day of the Gods. The day of the Gods begins with the beginning of the *Uttarāyaṇa* of the human beings i.e., month of *Thai*; and our *Mārgaṣīrṣa* month is the dawn of the Gods and hence its sanctity. The Gods too have death even as they have birth. They are called

immortals. not because they are deathless, but because of their longevity which is greater than that of other beings.

So all the beings of this universe including the Gods are subject to the control of Time and are therefore created and destroyed by one Supreme Being (Parabrahman) which is without birth and death. The destruction or pralaya as it is called, is classified under four heads:

- 1 Nitya pralaya is the sleep or death.
2. Naimittika pralaya is the disintegration of the three worlds (Bhūḥ, Bhuvah and Svah) at the end of a day of Brahmā.
3. Mahā pralaya is the great deluge at the end of the age of the four-faced Brahmā *i.e.*, at the end of one hundred Brāhmīc years.
4. Ātyantika pralaya is the final deliverance or the attainment of salvation by a Jīva and after that the Jīva is never again in the clutches of karma and in the wheel of Saṁsāra (birth and death).

As Kāla is omnipresent, it exists also in the Nitya vibhūti *i.e.*, Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. But it has no power there and therefore does not bring about the growth, decay or destruction of anything. Nothing there is subject to Time as all things are eternal. Kāla is useful there only to describe one action as taking place before or after another. For instance in the service that the Muktas do to Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, they give a bath (snāna) at a point of time previous to that in which they offer food (bhojana). It is all day there for ever and there is no division into day and night. Kāla is under the control of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa and He manipulates it as He likes. It is used as an instrument by Him in bringing about the modification of the various objects in Līlā Vibhūti.

### *Śuddha Sattva—(Pure Sattva)*

Śuddha Sattva is the third of the three Acetana Tattvas. It is a substance which is the abode of a unique Sattva guṇa. This is different from the Sattvagūṇa in Prakṛti and is unmingled with Rajas and Tamas. Śuddha Sattva is self-luminous and pleasing. It does not cause shrinkage of knowledge, nor does it cause hunger, thirst and other such drawbacks. Its essential nature is bliss itself

and even the worlds of Brahma and other Gods pale into insignificance and look like hell before it. Śuddha Sattva is the constituent element of Śrī Vaikuṇṭha which abounds in objects of enjoyment, places of enjoyment and means of enjoyment and which is beyond the region of thought and word of even great yogins and sages. Just as Prakṛti, which is the place of bondage of bound souls, is infinite on all sides horizontally and downwards except at the top where it is limited by Śuddha Sattva; Śuddha Sattva, which is the place of release for them, is infinite on all sides and upwards except at the bottom where it is limited by Prakṛti.

This Universe of Śuddha Sattva, known as Śrī Vaikuṇṭha is described in the Upanishads and the Purāṇas under various names and each name is indicative of one excellent quality or other possessed by it. For instance, it is called Paramapada, because it is the Supreme Goal of attainment for the souls. It is Ānandamaya because of its essentially pleasing nature. It is known as Śāḍguṇyamaya as it is helpful in realizing the sixfold divine qualities of paramātmā, viz., jñāna (knowledge), aiśvarya (lordship), bala (strength), vīrya (valour), śakti (energy), and tejas (splendour). This universe is indicated by the Pañcōpanishad mantras and so it gets the name of Pañcōpaniṣanmaya. It is Pañcaśaktimaya, because its constituent elements are the five spiritual elements known as Pañca Śakti. Its name is Śrī Vaikuṇṭha (Spotless), because it is beyond the region of Tamas and Rajas. All the objects there are eternal and glorious; so it is Nityavibhūti (Eternal Spiritual Universe). The bodies of Īśvara and Nityas (Ever-free Angels) and of the Muktas (Released Souls) are composed of this Śuddha Sattva and they are subject only to the eternal will of Paramātmā.

The Upanishads again teach that in this Spiritual Universe of Śrī Vaikuṇṭha is a city known as Ayodhya (Unassailable) and Aparājita (Invincible) which abounds in mansions, towers, and pavilions, all charming and luminous. There is a mansion Ānanda by name in which is a gem-set hall of great proportions and excellence supported by innumerable pillars which are transparent. In this Hall is Ananta, the great Serpent of infinite knowledge and strength with his thousand expanded hoods. Śrīman Nārāyaṇa with His divine and auspicious form Divyamaṅgala Vighraha is seated on it along with His consorts, Śrī, Bhūmī and Nīlā. His form is extremely beautiful and like His Svarūpa, the



more we enjoy it the greater is the novelty of enjoyment which never satiates and ever creates an eagerness to enjoy it more and more. To Bhagavān Himself this form is more pleasing than His own Svarūpa. It is His will that this form of His should be eternal in order that the Muktas (Released Souls) and Nityas (Ever-free Angels) may enjoy it for ever and for ever. This enjoyment of Bliss is common to Paramātmā. Nityas and Muktas and there is no difference or degree in the Bliss enjoyed by them.

Again Śuddha Sattva is the element which constitutes the forms that Paramapurūṣa takes when He comes to this world for the redemption of the souls. When He incarnates Himself in the Vibhava Avatāra as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa and when He manifests Himself as Lord Raṅganātha at Śrīraṅgam or Lord Śrīnivāsa at Tirumalai or in other places, all His forms are of the nature of Śuddha Sattva and they are divine and auspicious. When we instal in temples or houses the idols of Rāma or Kṛṣṇa, Raṅganātha or Varadarāja and consecrate them with the Mantras according to the dictates of the Śāstras, the Lord in His Mercy assumes forms similar to the ones we have installed, out of Śuddha Sattva element, and pervades and permeates them.

*Bimhākṛtyā ātmanā bimbe  
samāgatya āvatiṣṭhate,  
karotyamūrtāṁ akhilāṁ  
bhogasaktiṁ tu cātmasāt.*

— (Śattvatasamhita, 6-22.)

Though the Śuddha Sattva form is invisible to the eyes of ordinary men, the Lord remains there for our uplift and redemption. The perfected Souls do realize and enjoy them as is evidenced by the experiences and works of the Ālvārs and Ācāryas.

According to Viśiṣṭādvaita Siddhānta, Acetana, Cetana and Iṣvara (non-sentient matter, sentient being and God) are the three major Tattvas or Realities. The Acetana is classified under three heads as Prakṛti, Kāla and Śuddha Sattva. Śuddha Sattva or Unmixed Sattva is the glorious self-luminous and blissful substance which exists in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. The objects, materials, and places of enjoyment (Bhogya, Bhogopakarāṇa, Bhogasthāna) there are composed of Śuddha Sattva only. Kāla (Time) is a substance which is used as an auxiliary cause by Paramātmā when

He creates, protects and destroys the Universe. Prakṛti or Primordial Matter which has the three guṇas-Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, evolves itself at the time of creation into twenty-three Tattvas. All the objects in the world are created by Paramātmā, out of these twenty-four Tattvas or categories, viz., Prakṛti, Mahat, Ahaṁkāra, the five jñānendriyas (cognitive sense-organs of hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch), the five karmendriyas (conative sense-organs with the functions of the tongue, the feet, the hands, evacuation and reproduction), the five tanmātras (the essences of sound, touch colour, taste and smell) and the five Mahābhūtas (the gross elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether).

## B. Cetana Tattva

### 3. Ātmā (*Individual self*)

Let us now take up the Cetana Tattva which is also known by the names of Ātmā, Jīva and Puruṣa. The essential nature of Ātmā is self-consciousness (Jñānasvarūpa) and bliss (Ānandasvarūpa) and it is devoid of the three guṇas of Prakṛti. The Ātmā is sometimes referred to in the Philosophical literature as the twenty-fifth Tattva to show that it is different from the twenty-four Prakṛti-Tattvas and different also from the twenty-sixth Tattva, the Paramātmā.

The Ātmā is distinguished from the other two Tattvas, viz., Acetana and Īśvara in several ways: the Jīva or Ātmā is supported and ruled by another, exists and acts for the benefit of another whereas Īśvara is self-supported, is not ruled by another and does not act for the benefit of another. All the actions of the Prakṛti are invariably controlled by the will of another and those of Īśvara are always self-controlled. But in the case of the Jīva some of its actions are entirely under the control of Īśvara and some under its own control. All the three kinds of Acetana are always the 'śarīra' (body) and Īśvara is always the 'śarīrī' (soul), whereas the Jīva is both śarīra and śarīrī-śarīra (body) for Īśvara, and śarīrī (soul) for the body that he is encased in.

The qualities of the Ātmā have been succinctly stated by Śrī Alavandār in his *Ātmasiddhi* in the following verse:

*Dehendriya manah prānadhībhyo'ṅyo 'nanyasādhanaḥ,  
Nityo vyāpī pratikṣetram ātmā bhinnah svataḥ sukhī.*

The Ātmā is different from the body, the sense-organs, the mind, the vital air and knowledge; it is cognised by itself, and it is eternal and subtle. It is distinct in every body and it is blissful by nature.

The Ātmā is self-conscious and survives the body after its death. So it is not the body. Moreover the body belongs to the Ātmā and is not the Ātmā itself. In our daily life we come across such expressions as 'my body', 'my senses' and 'my mind'. From this it is clear that over and above these, viz., body, sense and mind, there is something which is indicated by the word 'my' here and which often calls itself as 'I'. The sense-organs-five jñānendriyas and five karmendriyas—cannot be either severally or jointly the Ātmā. If each senseorgan is an Ātmā, then there will be a multiplicity of Ātmās in one body (as there are ten indriyas). But this is not a fact. If it is contended that all the ten indriyas jointly are the Ātmā, then the eye must know what the ear hears and the ear must experience what the nose smells. Such is not our experience in the world and so the indriyas jointly too are not the Ātmā.

The mind is not the Ātmā as it is but an instrument for the Ātmā to know and remember things. Some say that Prāṇa (vital air) is Ātmā because when there is Prāṇa the Ātmā is alive and when there is no Prāṇa the Ātmā seems to be dead. But this view is wrong. The Ātmā abides in its own being as a self-conscious entity and is different from Prāṇa. Nor can knowledge be equated with the Ātmā in spite of its being an eternal and self-luminous substance; for it always appears as an attribute of the Ātmā in which it inheres, and not as a knower as the Ātmā does.

The Ātmā is 'ananya-sādhana'—not cognised by others, but cognised by itself. The essential nature of the Ātmā is self-consciousness. It shines by itself and does not stand in need of another object to make it shine unlike the non-sentient things which shine only with the help of others. It is like the Sun that is luminous and therefore shines by itself. In this self-cognition the Ātmā always appears as 'aham' (I). The Ātmā sometimes is cognised by others and then it is referred to as 'you' 'he' etc.

The Ātmā possesses as its attribute knowledge which is known as attributive knowledge (Dharmabhūta-jñāna). The Ātmā acquires the knowledge of the objects of the world with the help of this dharmabhūta-jñāna (attributive knowledge). The attributive knowledge is luminous by itself (Svayamprakāśa) to the Ātmā that possesses it while revealing objects. When the attributive knowledge reveals, for example, a pot to the Ātmā which possesses that attributive knowledge, it reveals its own existence as well. It does not require another knowledge to reveal it at that time. The attributive knowledge reveals itself and reveals the pot for the purpose of the Ātmā. Even when the Ātmā reveals itself, the benefit of its luminosity is enjoyed by itself. So the Ātmā is the recipient of the benefit of every object revealed or disclosed be it the object in general or its own self.

A common characteristic of the Ātmā (or svarūpajñāna) and attributive knowledge is their both being of the nature of knowledge and being self-luminous, *i.e.*, being luminous without requiring anything else to light them up. The attributive knowledge has the additional characteristic of revealing or disclosing objects other than itself (which quality is known as viśayitva). The additional characteristic possessed by Svarūpa-jñāna (or Ātmā) is subjectiveness or inwardness (Pratyaktva), *i.e.*, shining for its own self. Though the svarūpa-jñāna (Ātmā) and dharmabhūta-jñāna (attributive knowledge) are both luminous by themselves, yet they are also capable of being apprehended by other forms of knowledge as being endowed with attributes like being eternal. When we perceive an object, say a book, dharmabhūta-jñāna contacts the object and reveals it to the Ātmā; but when the dharmabhūta-jñāna becomes itself the object of knowledge, it is revealed to the self by a part of its own self.

The Ātmā is nitya or eternal. It has no birth or death. Its attributive knowledge may contact or expand; that is, the Ātmā may know less or more, but its essential nature never undergoes any change. The different forms and names by which it is referred to do not belong to it. It assumes bodies according to its karma in the previous birth and in the embodied state it is said to be born or dead, young or old. Birth and death, youth and old age do not touch the Ātmā and they pertain to the body. Just as a man puts on a cloth and discards it when it gets torn, the Ātmā takes a body at birth and throws it away at death and it survives the body.

The means of knowledge, viz., perception, inference and scripture help us know that the Ātmā is eternal. We see that the Ātmā is able to remember past experiences. This clearly shows that the Ātmā is a permanent entity, which existed in the past when the experience first came to it, and which exists now when it remembers that past experience. The infant that is born takes to suckling without special training as a fish takes to water. From this we can infer that the infant should have had a previous birth when it had suckled and so in this birth it is able to do it as it brings with it the impressions from the previous birth. The Śāstras clearly state that the Ātmā does not perish at any time, even at the time of the great deluge, and that nobody can destroy it. The Ātmā is so subtle that it can enter into anything, whereas all other things are gross and they cannot get into the Ātmā. Only when they enter into it and disintegrate it, they will be able to destroy the Ātmā, and this they cannot do. So weapons cannot cut the Ātmā, fire cannot burn it and water cannot drench it.

The Ātmā is of the size of an atom. Being subtle by nature it can enter into all things, and so it is called Vyāpī. The word should not be taken to mean 'all-pervasive' as the Ātmā is only atomic in size. It pervades the body through the knowledge which is its attribute, and because of the pervasion of its attributive knowledge it is able to experience the pain or pleasure in any part of the body even though it is located in one small part thereof. The Ātmā is like the flame of the lamp and its knowledge is like its lustre.

There is one distinct Ātmā for every body and the Ātmās are infinite in number. We see that the knowledge of one man is different from that of another and that one man is happy when the other is sorrowful. One does not know the feeling of another. If there were only one ātma there cannot be the difference in knowledge and the ignorance of the feeling of one person in another. So we have to come to the inevitable conclusion that every body has a different Ātma.

The Ātma is by nature blissful. That is, it is always pleasing to itself both by its essential nature (svarūpa) and by its attributive knowledge. Like the Ever-free souls (the Nityasūris) who are experiencing Bliss in Śrī Vaikunṭha, all the Ātmās have the right of the enjoyment of Bliss. But because of the beginningless Avidyā and Karma, the jīva takes birth in this world and suffers from the

sorrows of Saṁsāra. It has got the qualities of knowing (Jñāṛṭva), willing (kartṛva) and enjoying (bhokṛṭva). It is a free agent. It can remain bound or it can attain mokṣa; it has the freedom to lapse into hell or go heavenward. Īśvara, out of Mercy, is ever eager to redeem the erring Jivas, and blessed are they that follow the path of virtue laid down by Him in the Śāstras and attain the eternal Bliss in Heaven.

#### 4. *Cetana: (i) Baddha (or Soul in Bondage)*

The Jīva or Puruṣa is defined as a cetana who has the qualities of Aṇutva or being atomic and Śeṣatva or being subservient. He is differentiated from the Acetana or the Non-sentient Matter by the qualities of knowing, willing and enjoying (jñāṛṭva, kartṛva, bhokṛṭva), and from Īśvara by the qualities of Ādheyatva (being supported), vidheyatva (being ruled) and Śeṣatva (being subservient). The Jīva is self-luminous and is therefore expressed as 'aham' or I.

The Jīvas are infinite in number and they are divided into three groups: Baddha or souls in bondage, Mukta or freed souls and Nitya or Ever-free souls. The Baddhas are those that are associated with a body as a result of the karmas in the previous birth, and inhabit the fourteen worlds of the Brahmāṇḍa. All the Jīvas from Brahmā, the highest among the gods, to grass, the smallest among plants, come under this group. They are classified under four heads: Sura or the divine beings, Nara or the human beings, Tiryak or animals and Sthāvara or stationary beings i.e., plants. Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme God, creates Brahmā who, in turn, creates gods like Rudra and Indra, yogins like Sanakā and Sanatkumāra, Devarṣis like Nārada and Atri, as well as Prajāpatīs like Ḍakṣa and Pulastya, Siddhas, Gandharvas, Kinaras and Vidyādharas, all are of divine origin. The human beings are divided into four castes Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Sūdra. Beasts, birds, reptiles and the like come under the species of animals, and trees, creepers, bushes and grass are known as the Sthāvara or the stationary (creatures).

There are four ways by which life evolves from the latent stage to the patent. They are Udbhijja or what is produced from shoots or sprouts, Svedaja or what is born out of perspiration or

warm vapour. *Aṇḍaja* or what comes out of the egg or oviparous being, and *Jarāyuja* or what is born of a womb or viviparous being. The *devas* and men are born of the womb. But some gods like *Brahmā* and *Rudra*, some *Yogins* like *Sanaka* and some human beings like *Sītā*, *Draupadī* and *Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna* are *Ayonija* or not born out of the womb. *Bhūtas* and *Vetālas* *i.e.*, evil spirits and goblins also are not womb-born. Amongst creatures some, like the horses and lions, are *jarāyuja* or womb-born, some like the birds and reptiles are *aṇḍaja* or egg-born, and some like the lice are *svedaja* or sweat-born. Trees and other plants are *udbhijja* or shoot-born.

There are fourteen worlds that are inhabited by the *Jīvas* and they are: *Bhū-loka*, *Bhuvar-loka*, *Suvar-loka*, *Mahar-loka*, *Jana-loka*, *Tapo-loka*, *Satya-loka*; *Atala*, *Vitala*, *Sutala*, *Talātala*, *Mahātala*, *Rasātala* and *Pātāla*. *Bhūloka* is the *Karma-bhūmi* where the *Jīvas* acquire *Puṇya* or *Pāpa*, the fruits of which are enjoyed in the worlds, above or below. *Bhuvar-loka* is the world of air and *Suvar-loka* is the Heaven or the world of *Indra* and other gods. *Mahar-loka*, *Jana-loka* and *Tapo-loka* are inhabited by *yogins* and mind-born sons of *Brahmā*. *Satya-loka* which is at the top of all is the world of *Brahmā*, the Creator. All these worlds are above, and *Atala* and others are *Nether-worlds i.e.*, below the Earth.

All the fourteen worlds are within a *Brahmāṇḍa*—the Cosmic Universe in egg-form. The *Purāṇas* declare that there are myriads of such *Brahmāṇḍas* which are hanging in clusters from every hair on the body of the *Virāt-Puruṣa* or the Cosmic Being like bunches of figs from the fig tree. Each *Brahmāṇḍa* has got its own worlds, the sun, moon and other planets. It is presided over by a *Brahmā* who is helped in his work by the eight *Dik-pālakas* or Divine Guardians of the Quarters and sages. All of them are ruled by *Paramātmā*, who is above all, and whom they serve and subserve.

The birth of the *Jīvas* in the world is due to *Avidyā* or Nescience in them. *Avidyā* is the cause of *Karma*; repeated performance of *karma* by them leaves *Vāsanā* or the latent impression in their mind, which in its turn, generates *ruci* or propensity to do an act. This leads to *Prakṛtisambandha* or association with the *Prakṛti* or the body. The embodiment gives rise to *Avidyā* which is the cause of further *karma*. Thus all these

are working in a cycle, each one being the effect of the one that precedes and the cause of the other that follows. As in the case of the seed and the plant, we cannot say which is the cause and which is the effect. This has been going on from time immemorial meandering like a stream with neither beginning nor end. Every new birth, therefore, is the consequence of the past karma and is the seed of the future. Every karma thus produces its effect and the latter in its turn becomes the cause of the succeeding act and so on *ad infinitum*. The law of karma works with relentless vigour and no man can escape the consequences of his karma. The Prārabdha karma or the karma that has begun to operate cannot be cured, but has to be endured with fortitude. It is like the arrow that has been discharged from the bow and cannot be withdrawn. But we can, by correct knowledge and virtuous deed, shape our future by arresting evil tendencies, and it is like the arrow that is yet to be discharged and can be withdrawn.

The doctrine of karma solves the vexed problems of apparently unmerited sufferings and inequalities in life. According to this, the inequalities and injustices that we come across in the world are but the result of conduct in a previous birth which has begun to give fruit. The doctrine of karma does not preach fatalism, nor does it lead to inaction or aversion to make effort on the part of a man to work for his redemption and uplift. It only declares that every man is the architect of his destiny and he can make his fortune or mar his future. Man has the faculty of reason by which he can reflect on his animal instincts and control them, whereas the animal acts according to its instincts. If the man conquers the animal inclination caused by his attachment to the body, he attains moral sovereignty. Not even a god can conquer him who has conquered himself. The wise man who controls his senses is like a skilful charioteer who has control over the horses and reaches his destination safe; but a morally weak man is like an incompetent charioteer who is drawn away by the unruly horses and thrown into a ditch.

Jivas who do meritorious deeds on the earth go to Svarga and enjoy the pleasures there. When the effect of their Puṇya karma is exhausted, they return to the earth by the same path through the medium of rain-drops. The rain nourishes the plants and grains which supply food to animals and men, and the food is changed into life-giving germs. Then the Jivas are born as animals or men



according to their karma. The Jivas who go in the way of the body which is an admixture of the five elements viz., earth, water, fire, air and ether and do wicked deeds, go to Naraka (Hell) and experience untold sufferings there. When the effect of the Pāpa karma is spent, they are born again in suitable bodies. By good deeds a man can rise to the status of Brahmā, the highest being; and by bad deeds he will descend into a human, animal or sub-human species.

Though the Jivas are in the grip of karma and are under-going the throes of birth and death, it does not mean that they suffer from original sin or innate defect. Sin is something adventitious. If it were innate, it would be in the nature of the Jivas. In that case it cannot be removed and Mukti would be impossible. The scriptures specifically declare that the Jivas in the state of release are pure and perfect and have not even the shadow of karma. So the Jivas, who are pure and stainless by nature, somehow have come under the sway of karma. Though the contact of the Jivas with karma is beginningless, it has an end when they attain salvation ultimately.

Only two of the four classes of Jivas—the gods and the human beings—are subject to the Śāstra. They alone have been blessed with the power to think and act, and so puṇya or pāpa karma can be postulated only with reference to them and not with reference to the animals and stationary beings (Tiryak and Sthāvara) which are not subject to Śāstra and which therefore can do neither puṇya nor pāpa. Dharma is that which is ordained by the Śāstras; and the practice of the ordinance confers puṇya and the violation of it pāpa. This will mean that the Śāstra is the only authority by which we can say a particular act is the puṇya or pāpa.

The goals of human endeavour or Puruṣārthas are said to be four in number: Dharma or virtue, Artha or Wealth, Kāma or Pleasure and Mokṣa or Salvation. Artha and Kāma are sought after by those who care more for bodily comforts and conveniences here, and Dharma by those who believe in the existence of a soul over and above the body, and long for pleasures in the other world. Mokṣa is the highest Puruṣārtha—the enjoyment of eternal and ever lasting Bliss in Vaikuṇṭha. Those who have, by a study of the Śāstras at the feet of the Acāryas, have acquired correctly a knowledge of the nature of the body, Jiva and Paramātmā, will go in for Mokṣa. The Jiva in this world who entertains a desire for

Mokṣa is called the Mumukṣu and when he attains it by the adoption of the means, he is known as 'Mukta'.

### 5. *Cetana (ii) Mukta (Freed Soul)*

We shall begin the chapter on Mukta with a well-known parable that illustrates the true nature and condition of the Baddha Jīva who is to become the Mukta or Freed Soul.

Once a certain king went a-hunting to the forest accompanied by his queen and his infant prince. There the king and the queen were much absorbed in sport and did not notice that their child had strayed away from the tent. They were not able to trace the child and so returned to the city with a heavy heart. The child lost in the forest was too young to realize and express that he was the prince of the country, and was wandering about helplessly. A hunter who came that way saw the child alone and took him home. He grew up in the hamlet along with other children, spoke their language as if it were his own, ate their food and lived their life. Thus having been brought up as a hunter's child, the boy found his good and evil, his joys and sorrows in gruesome things entirely different from enjoyments befitting a prince. A few years later some sages happened to see the boy in the company of hunters. They were struck by the noble bearing and appearance of the boy not commonly found in hunters. From enquiry and from close observation of the marks of royalty on him they concluded he must be the prince lost in the forest years before. One day they approached him when he was alone and explained to him his true nature and the circumstances that had brought him there. The boy listened to their words and was slowly weaned away from the company of hunters. The sages gave him education and training suited to a prince; and by their own example and precept they made him give up the food and company of the hunters and created in him a desire for a cleaner and better way of life. They sent word to the sorrowing king that his son was alive and in a fit condition to be taken back. They informed the boy also that his father was the king of the country and he was eager to see him. When the kind sages took the boy and restored him to the king, both the prince and the king were happy at their unexpected union after a long time.

*Let us now turn to the story of the Jīva.*

The Jīva has a close relationship with Paramātmā. He is described in the Śāstras as the 'Son', 'Disciple' and 'Servant' of God, and as having a place in the bosom of Paramātmā like the kaustubha gem. But somehow he forgets his divine home and heritage like the prince in the parable, wanders in the world, identifies himself with the body and subjects himself to the hardships of gestation, birth, old age and death. He becomes a prey to all the afflictions the flesh is heir to which are of three kinds (1) Ādhyātmika or bodily sufferings like pain, disease, etc., (2) Ādhibhautika or sufferings caused by other beings; and (3) Ādhidaivika or those caused by divine agency like rain, thunder, fire, etc. He forfeits the estate of God-bliss, his rightful heritage, and is much in the same state as a boat struggling in the midst of a turbulent ocean beaten by the furious and unending waves of afflictions and sorrows.

But the Paramātmā will not leave the Jīva to sink and perish. He is ever watchful and is on the look-out for an opportunity to rescue and restore him to his rightful place. He, out of His Grace, sends some pious and holy men for the redemption of the erring Jīvas. The pious men are themselves sympathetic and so go about this work with fervour and enthusiasm. They consider the good of Jīvas as their own and in an absolutely disinterested manner teach them the true nature of the body, Ātmā and Paramātmā and create in them a dislike for the trivial and evanescent pleasures of the world and a longing for the attainment of Paramātmā and the enjoyment of the supreme and eternal bliss. The men, who do the work of God for the redemption of the Jīvas, are the Ācāryas who have a unique place in religious literature. It is stated in the Śāstras that a person gets an Ācārya as a result of good deeds done by him in previous birth.

*Īśvarasya ca sauhārdam yadṛcchāsukṛtam tathā,  
Viṣṇoḥ kaṭākṣam adveṣam ābhimukhyam ca sāttvikaiḥ.  
Sambhāṣaṇam ṣaḍ etāni hi Ācārya -prāpti-hetavaḥ.*

God's benevolence, good deeds done by chance, the gracious glance of God, freedom from hatred, willingness to learn and conversation with good men—these are the six causes that lead to the acquisition of an Ācārya.

The Ācāryas reveal to the Jīvas the intimate relation existing between the latter and Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of Lakṣmī, who is the Lord and Ruler of the entire Universe. They try earnestly to help the Jīvas attain the Lord and feel that the attainment of the glory of Mokṣa by the Jīvas would give them as much delight as the sovereignty of Vaiṣṇava and of the whole earth. With the help of words, neither excessive nor defective, the Ācāryas desire to remove the ignorance, doubts and erroneous notions of the Jīvas. They teach them the true nature of God, soul and body in the following way: 'The body is not the Ātmā, but it belongs to it. The body exists and acts for the benefit of the Ātmā who controls it. The Ātmā is not Īśvara or Paramātmā, but only a mode or inseparable attribute of Paramātmā. Paramātmā is the Ātmā of all Ātmās and also of the non-sentient objects. The relationship between Īśvara on one hand and the world of sentient beings and non-sentient things on the other is the same as that between the soul and the body and this is known as Śarīratmabhāva sambandha (body-soul-relationship).' This is the most important and unique doctrine of Viśiṣṭādvaita.

From the teachings of the Ācāryas the Jīvas acquire a knowledge of the true nature of enjoyment or experience in this world as well as in Svarga and also of release from bondage. They also learn about the means that leads to Saṁsāra and Mokṣa so that they can reject the former and adopt the latter. They get to know the routes by which the Ātmās travel to their destined abodes and about the obstacles that stand in the way of salvation. They also learn that the attainment of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa in Śrī Vaiṣṇava and service to Him is the highest end to be achieved (paramapuruṣārtha).

When a person acquires, by the Grace of the Ācāryas, a knowledge of the things detailed above, he becomes averse to earthly pleasures which always end in pain and longs for eternal Bliss and freedom from the trammels of Saṁsāra. Such a person is called a Mumukṣu or one desirous of release. Then he adopts the means for Mokṣa viz., Bhakti-Yoga or Prapatti according to his equipment and capacity; and as a result of it he becomes free from Saṁsāra and attains Salvation when he is called Mukta or Freed Soul.

We shall now see how the Baddha becomes Mukta. However sinful the Baddha-Jīva may be, there does come a time in his

career in this Universe when Destiny in the form of Divine Grace comes to him in an unexpected manner. God confers His blessings on him when he is in his mother's womb and also when he takes birth. Later He comes to him in the form of Ācāryas. They consecrate his body by imprinting on it the symbol of God's feet and lift him from the depths of the world by extending the hand of knowledge of the Śāstras. The Jīva is rescued from the abyss of 'I-ness and My-ness' i.e., the false notions that 'I am the master' and 'all things are mine'. He realizes that Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa are the two Paramount Deities and service to Them is the highest end to be achieved. Consequently he gives up his attachment to the earthly pleasures which are enjoyed by the senses and to the joy of Atma (kaivalyānanda) which is trivial, though endless. He comes to the conclusion that excepting Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa no one can save him; and in proper time and at the earliest opportunity he surrenders himself at Their feet and seeks Their protection. He prays to Them that they, out of Their grace, should save him and cut asunder the deep root of the powerful Karma that has been holding him under control from time immemorial. He makes an appeal that he should no longer be allowed to be confused by Avidyā (nescience), tempted by Kāma (desire) and confined by Karma, but should be lifted out of the wheel of Saṁsāra (worldly life).

As the Divya Dampatis (Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa) have mercifully taken upon Themselves the responsibility of protecting him, the Jīva is now free from all burden of saving himself, free from all fear of evil, and free from any doubt about the attainment of fruit. He eagerly awaits the time of departure from the body when all the Karmas will abandon him without a murmur. As the final moment arrives, God lovingly confers on him a vision of Himself and makes the Jīva think of Him.

Then the Jīva begins his spiritual journey in the embrace of God, Who lives in the heart. He passes through the Brahmarandhra which is the main gate of the body known as Brahma-pura, and which is illumined for him by the in-dwelling Paramātmā (Hārda). The Jīva emerges from the body and soars gloriously to the world of eternal beauty and bliss by the straight and radiant path of gods (Devayāna, Arcirādimārga). He is escorted by Celestial Guides or Ātivāhikas and passes through a beautiful opening in the centre of the orb of the Sun. The making of a single

Mukta is a cosmic event and the gods hail the entry of the finite self into the Infinite and sing his praise. On the way, at every stage of the spiritual journey, he is welcomed and honoured by the cosmic Gods like Agni, Vāyu, Varuṇa, Indra and Brahmā in their respective regions. He soars higher and higher and goes beyond the universe which is in Egg-form.

The Jīva escorted by the Ambassador of Eternity, Amānava at last enters and crosses by his will the River of Immortality, Virajā by name, which marks the boundary line or the transition between the empirical sphere of Karma and the transcendental sphere of Brahman. The waters of Virajā are cool, clear and gentle as God's Mercy and are eternally flowing. By plunging into it the Jīva is purified and perfected; he goes to the other shore and enters his own Home of Paramātmā where there is light without night or nescience. Now he is literally the Freed Soul. What the Mukta experiences thereafter is, in the words of Śrī Vedānta Deśika, 'a wonder that defies all description in words.'

## 6. Mukta in Nityavibhūti

*(The freed soul in the world of Eternal Splendour)*

Ālvārs and Ācāryas, who came to this mortal world as messengers of God blessed by Him with divine vision, have in their works bequeathed to us a vivid description of the spiritual enjoyments of Muktas in the World of Eternal Splendour (Nityavibhūti.) In the light of what they have left behind we shall try to have a glimpse of these wonderful experiences of the Muktas. The spiritual journey of the Mukta or freed Soul to the World of Eternal Splendour and his activities there are revealed to us by the Kauṣītakī Upanishad and the Hymns of the Ālvārs. Following them, Śrī Rāmānuja in his *Vaikuṇṭha Gadya* and Śrī Vedānta Deśika in his *Paramapadasopāna* have described them in great detail. The section that follows is based entirely on the authority of the works referred to. What we are going to read is completely supra-sensual and supra-mundane and the reader may feel amused or even sceptic if he does not bring some faith. Śrī Vedānta Deśika, the great philosopher-poet, has stated that these are things which will be clearly understood and realized only in the state of Salvation when the Mukta is himself the experiencer.

*Vitāmasi pade lakṣmīkāntam vicitravibhūtikam  
 Sacivagamitāḥ sampadyāvīrbhavat saha-jākṛtiḥ,  
 Sphuṭa-tadapṛthaksiddhiḥ siddhyadguṇāṣṭakataphalo  
 Bhajati paramaṁ. Sāmyam bhoge nivr̥ttikathojjhitam.*

— *Rahasyatrayasāra-paripūrṇa Brahmānubhava*)

[The Mukta is led by his guides to the Consort of Lakṣmī who is possessed of varied glories in the region beyond Prakṛti and attains Him. Then he has his essential nature in full manifestation and realizes his inseparable connection with the Lord. As a consequence he acquires the eight attributes (of freedom from sin and the like) without any question of his returning again (to Saṁsāra), and he attains, in regard to enjoyment, perfect resemblance to the Lord.]

The Baddha or bound Soul, who has been wandering all these ages in the thorny path of Saṁsāra enjoying fleeting pleasures almost unexpectedly comes across an Ācārya who imparts to him right knowledge and puts him in the right path. On the advice of the Ācārya, he adopts, according to his own equipment and capacity, Bhaktiyoga or Prapatti Yoga, the means for salvation. He is now a kṛtakṛtya i.e., he has no more problems to solve or evil to subdue. He eagerly awaits the time of final departure as one does the arrival of a welcome guest, for, death to him is no destruction, but an entry into the Realm of God.

At the time of the dissolution of his body, which may happen anywhere, at any time, and in any manner, the Jīva withdraws from the gross body to the subtle state and, in the protective embrace of God in his heart, ascends to the Absolute by the straight and shining path of Arcirādi. Mukti in the subjective aspect implies self-transcendence or mastery over karma, and in the objective aspect, going beyond the limits of space-time. He passes through all the worlds of the gods where he is welcomed and honoured, and at last plunges into the waters of the River Virajā from which he emerges purified and perfected. Then being escorted by Amānava, the Ambassador of the Absolute, he lands in the world of Transcendental Splendour (Nitya-vibhūti or Śrī Vaikuṇṭha). He, who was a victim of Saṁsāra, is now a victor thereof and is no longer subject to Vedic and Vedāntic imperatives and determinations.

Then begins the glorious march of the Mukta into that world of wonder which is shining and eternal, which is ever the object of vision of the eternally Free Souls (Nityasūris) and which was the dream of his life ever since his initiation by the Ācārya into the Spiritual Literature. First the Mukta beholds two oceans of Nectar 'Ara' and 'Nya' by name and beyond them mountains and gardens, streams and lakes-all blissful and divine in essence. He approaches then the Lake of Nectar, named Airammadiyam which looks like a vast reservoir of supreme Bliss and the Aśvattha tree, Soma-savana by name which appears to be the stationary form of Paramātmā and which is waited upon by Nityasūris. Five hundred divine damsels, in five groups of a hundred each, sent by Paramātmā from the City of Vaikuṇṭha, come forward to receive him with the blowing of trumpets and beating of drums. They bear in their hands raiments and ornaments, perfumed powder and collyrium and wreaths of flowers. To the flourish of trumpets the damsels give a royal welcome to the Mukta, as the attendants of a queen will to a prince, adorn him with the Brahmic decorations and exclaim "You are the chosen of the Lord, come and rule over Heaven."

The Mukta proceeds further; and as he draws near the Tilya Tree, Sālajya Saṁsthāna or the Divine Shrine and the Aparājita Āyatana or the Hall of unsurpassed Majesty, the Brāhmic fragrance, Brāhmic flavour and Brāhmic colour enter into him. His body becomes superb as though formed by the fusion of the fragrance of the Pārijāta (the Divine flower), the effulgence of the Sun, and the sweetness of Nectar. When he reaches the city of Vaikuṇṭha which is far superior to the other Heavens of Happiness, Joy and Bliss, the Nityasūris (the eternally Free Souls) with crowns on their heads come in groups to receive him and take him to the entrance of the city bedecked with banners waving aloft. When he nears the gate, Indra and Prajāpati, the Divine Guards at the gate, step forward and greet him with the words: "Hail to thee! The servants of the Lord are our masters. Deign to enter our abode." Then he passes through the gates of the City of Śrī Vaikuṇṭha ever open to the devotees of the Lord, and moves in procession along the broad streets, kept clean and decorated specially for the occasion, and flanked on either side with towering mansions sparkling with gems. Fresh batches of Nityasūris come now and in the streets wash his feet with reverence and love. They exclaim with joy that it is only by their good fortune that the



Mukta has come to their world leaving the tempting human world where Mercy and other such lovable qualities of God shine to greater advantage. Celestial damsels with moon-like faces come forward carrying in their hands the Pādukā or Śrī Saṭāri of the Lord—which is the greatest treasure for a devotee—fragrant flower-dust, water-filled pots and auspicious lamps. Taken by them in procession the Mukta comes near the Golden Hall when the Brāhmic glory enters into him. And now he becomes the compeer of the Lord of Cosmic Repute.

Then the Mukta arrives at the gem-set Hall of Bliss which is spoken of in the Upanishads as the 'Audience-Hall of Prajāpatis where he is received with pride and affection by the Lord's Guards and Retinue. The Dignitaries there, under the orders of Viṣvaksena, God's Commander-in-chief, come to receive him. The Mukta, overwhelmed with joy and devotion, prostrates and rises again and again till he reaches the forefront of the gem-set Hall. There beholds Garuḍa, God's Vehicle, who glitters like a winged mountain of burnished gold and who stands in a kneeling posture like mirror in front of God. The Mukta offers his salutations to him all of whose limbs are said to be the various Vedas incarnate. From there he walks along the aisle on either side of which are assembled innumerable groups of Nityasūris who are steeped in the enjoyment of the perfect form and auspicious qualities of the Lord. They are so much attached to God and so very solicitous about the safety of the person of God that even when they hear the singing of Hallelujah by devoted souls they are perturbed, and mistaking it for the war-cry of inimical Asuras, bestir themselves to protect the All protector in a world of perfect safety and peace. Some delight themselves by conducting a debate in which they take opposite sides and try to establish the superiority of one quality of the Lord over others and in this debate defeat also is as pleasing as victory; for rancour, enmity and other such bad qualities are foreign to that World of Bliss and perfection. The age-long yearnings of the Mukta to become one of the company of the chosen devotees of God are realized and he joins their ranks. He beholds that God is waited upon by His retinue and attendants, and is bedecked by ornaments and weapons—all in their proper form and in their proper places. This vision increases his longings for the service of the Lord and he goes nearer.

Beside the Throne of God are seated the ancient Ācāryas whose faces beam with joy at the sight of the Mukta. They are happy that the efforts of the Lord to redeem the Jīva through them have ultimately borne fruit. The Mukta bows to them in respect and expresses his gratitude by saying that they imparted knowledge to him when he was ignorant, and weaned him away from evil propensities when he was in the mortal world. He prays to them to bless him further by placing their feet on his head.

Blessed by the Ācāryas, the Mukta draws near the Paryāṅka or Throne of Unbounded Effulgence which no mortal eye has seen and of which till then he has had only fragmentary Śāstraic knowledge. It is formed by the integration of all the Tattvas in the Nityavibhūti and Līlā-vibhūti in its various parts. It has Dharma, Jñāna, Vairāgya and Aiśvarya for its legs, and Adharma, Ajñāna and the like for planks. In the centre of the throne is a divine thousand-petalled lotus of marvellous lustre like that of a myriad rising suns. On eight petals in the eight corners of this lotus are eight angles Vimala and others by name, who are white like moonlight and who wave chowries which spread moonlight-like lustre all around. The sight of the service of these damsels fills the Mukta with hopes that his longing to serve the Lord with cāmara in hand will soon be realized.

The pericarp of this lotus is of great proportions, being bigger than millions of golden mountains grouped together. On the pericarp is the great Serpent Ādiśeṣa, of supreme wisdom and strength, whose milk-white body looks like the Milky Oceans of all the Brahmāṇḍas collected and arranged in layers. His body, full of fragrance, softness and purity, is coiled in circles so as to form a soft and lovely spring-cot for the Lord and His Consorts who shine with the freshness, charm and delicacy of flowers. The Mukta beholds the Serpent who bears on his lap the Lord who is infinite (Ananta). The thousand hoods of Ādiśeṣa serve as serried milk-white umbrellas for the Lord. The Mukta has a direct soul-sight of the Paramātmā who is Paraṁjyotis or Supreme Light with a form more luminous than a million suns.

The Mukta moves forward and slowly climbs on the couch placing his foot on the coils of Ādiśeṣa. The Lord receives him with open arms as a father would his loving infant and confers on him a status in no way different from that of the Nityasūris

(Eternally Free Souls) there. He is immensely delighted to see and get the company of the Mukta and He feels happy as though the acquisition of a Mukta is a great boon and benefit to Himself. Thus the Soul-hunger of the Paramātmā and the God-hunger of the Jīvatmā are satisfied and the separate consciousness of both is swallowed up in the enjoyment of Bliss.

The Mukta is accorded the seat of honour beneath the long-expected and hallowed feet of the Lord. He enjoys the perfections of Brahman with Brahman and enjoys everything everywhere by his mere will without any external aid or constraint. He wills the true and the good, and every wish is immediately fulfilled without the moral gulf between endeavour and end and between the apprehension of good and its attainment. Though he is the latest to arrive at the Hall of Bliss, there is no difference between him and the eternally present Nityasūris either in rank or in the quantity and quality of Bliss experienced. Nor is there any difference between the Bliss of the Mukta, the Self-ruler, and God, the World-ruler. The two are alike in all respects but for the acts of creation and rulership of the world which are exclusively God's.

The bliss of union is ever fruitful and enhances the value of the released state. The Mukta dances and sings with joy as he serves, and serves as he dances and sings. As an outlet for his joy he renders without intermission all kinds of service to the Lord in all places, in all circumstances and at all times. Not content with that he creates by his will kinsmen and associates so that he may serve God more fully in their company. Like the cow that goes after her calf or the calf that runs after its mother, the Mukta ever follows the Lord as His shadow wherever the latter goes—be it *Vaikuṇṭha*, the World of Eternal Splendour or *Saṁsāra*, the world of mortals. While the ascent of the Mukta to the World of Eternity is an escape from the sorry scheme of *Saṁsāra*, his descent into the finite world now expresses the cosmic freedom of the Mukta, whose all-pervasive consciousness destroys the barriers of time and distance. Once the Mukta attains the *Nityavibhūti*, the world of Transcendental Splendour, there is no compulsory return for him from there to the mortal world and he remains there for all time doing service to the Lord and to the Fraternity of Free and Freed Souls.

The idea of Dāsātva in Viśiṣṭādvaita does not imply slave mentality extolled as a spiritual value, but brings out the infinite riches of the abandonment of egoism and the attunement of the Jīva to the cosmic purpose of universal redemption. Love is fulfilled in surrender and service which yield infinite joy and bliss.

The Mukta enjoys all the perfections of Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. He achieves Sālokya or identity of abode with the Lord. It leads to Sāmīpya or proximity to the Lord, and Sārūpya or similarity of form with the Lord and is consummated in Sāyujya or the Bliss of Communion—Brahmānanda. What we have striven to give here is the description of a thing which is indescribable; for a Brahma-jñāni alone can give an experience-definition of the exalted state of Brahmānanda which transcends the imperfect medium of thought and language.

### 7. *Nityas or the Ever-free Souls*

The cetanas or Sentient Beings are classified under three heads; Baddhas or Bound Souls, Muktas or Freed Souls and Nityas or Ever-free Souls. It is true that the soul that was once in bondage (and hence called Baddha) becomes a Mukta as a result of the adoption of the means for acquiring freedom and attaining Salvation, and so there need not be a special classification as Baddha and Mukta. But the nature of the Mukta in the state of Release is so superb and sublime that it looks as though he belongs altogether to a different species and hence the classification. When the Mukta enters Śrī Vaikuṇṭha or the World of Eternal Splendour, he enjoys the essential nature, the form and the qualities svarūpa, rūpa and guṇa of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa as well as His Vibhūtis. As an outlet for his overflowing bliss, he sings and dances, and begins to do service to the Lord. By all this he pleases the Lord; and by the pleasure of the Lord he feels pleased and blessed. Once the Ātmā reaches Śrī Vaikuṇṭha, there is no difference between him and the Ever-free Angels Nityasūris, there and he is their equal.

The Nityas or the Ever-free Souls are those who are in perfect enjoyment of the splendour and glory of the Lord in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha which is also known as Paramapada. They have not had even the shadow of the touch of the karma, and consequently have never been the victims of Saṁsāra or the empirical world of suffering.

They are sentient beings and are atomic in size. The Upanishads declare that they are free from sin and old age, from death and sorrow, and from hunger and thirst. They have complete fulfilment of their desires and accomplishment of their will. In the possession of these qualities they are like the Paramātmā Himself. But the only difference is that the Paramātmā has these qualities by nature while the Nityas have them at His pleasure which is eternally there. The Nityas are omniscient and omnipotent as well. They are subservient (Śeṣa) to the Paramātmā and are ever in the enjoyment of His blissful form and qualities. This enjoyment finds its fruition in service to the Lord. They assume different forms to serve Him. The tender creepers and beautiful plants, charming flowers and delicious fruits, warbling birds and frolicking deer—all, all are Ever-free Souls. Parks and gardens, lakes and streams, bowers and mansions are also the forms of the Nityas. They delight in serving the Paramātmā and His Consort, Lakṣmī, and in seeing Them pleased. Their joy is infinite and unsurpassed. There is no difference between the Bliss of the worshipping Nityas and that of the worshipped Lord. In Śrī Vaikuṇṭha there is absolute equality in the attainment and enjoyment of Bliss, be he a Mukta or a Nitya or even the Paramātmā. Even in the case of the Mukta, his enjoyment after reaching Śrī Vaikuṇṭha is equal in every way to that of the Nityas. The difference, if any, will be only in this that the Mukta attains that perfect Bliss at a point of time, and the Nityas have been having it from beginningless time.

The Nityas are of two kinds—Bhaktas who serve God directly and Bhāgavatas who serve the Bhaktas and thus indirectly serve God. Ananta, Garuḍa, Viṣvaksena and the like come under the first group, and all the rest under the second. Ananta is Ādiśeṣa, the thousand-hooded mystic serpent. With Vāruṇī and Kāntā his consorts, he serves the Lord in several ways, assuming suitable forms for the occasion. Ādiśeṣa serves as an umbrella when the Lord is on the move, is a throne when He sits, and is the footwear when He stands. He is again the couch for the Lord to recline and also the cosy pillow. He adorns the Lord as the fine raiment of golden hue. He is called “Śeṣa” or the Subservient, because he serves and subserves the Lord every moment and at all times. He is known as Ananta (Infinite) as he holds in the midst of his coiled body the Infinite Paramātmā. He is an ideal couch as he has the qualities of softness, coolness and fragrance (indispensable for a

couch). He has also the wisdom and strength to adjust his body suitably to the comfort of the Divine Couple resting on his lap. The scintillating gems in every one of the thousand hoods shed a divine effulgence all round like the colour of a lotus, because of which the Paramapada itself is referred to in the Śāstras as Puṇḍarīka (lotus).

*Nivāsa-śayyāsana-pādukāṁśuko  
padhāna-varṣātapa-vāraṇādibhiḥ.  
Śārīrabhedaistava śeṣatām gataiḥ  
yathocitam śeṣa itīrito janaiḥ.*

— Ālavandar's Stotraratna—40

Garuḍa is another Nityasūri; and Rudrā and Sukīrti are his consorts. He is always on attendance with folded hands in front of the Supreme Lord. His several limbs are said to be the diverse branches of the Vedas. There is a propriety in this. He brings the Lord to us even as the Vedas do. His service to the Lord is also manifold. He acts as a servant and a friend, a vehicle and a banner. He also serves as a throne, a canopy and a fan.

*Dāsas-sakhā vāhanam āsanam dhvajo  
yaste vitānam vyajanam trayī-mayaḥ.  
Upasthitam tena puro garutmata  
tvadanghri-sammarda-kiṇāṅka-sobhinā*

— Stotra Ratna-41

Viṣvakṣena, is another Nityasūri who is the commander of the forces and the steward of the mansion of the Lord. In him is vested the entire responsibility of the administration of Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. He wields a divine staff, the insignia of office, which keeps all the worlds in order and safety. He manages everything with such perfection and justice that the Lord merely puts his seal of approval by His gracious glances on all his actions. He has the unique honour and privilege of having for food what has been offered and used by the Lord and so has the appellation Śeṣāsana (he that consumes what is left behind).

*Tvadiya-bhuktojjhita-śeṣa-bhojinā  
tvayā nisrṣṭātma-bhareṇa yad-yathā.  
Priyeṇa senāpatinā nyavedi tat  
tathānujānantam udāra-vikṣaṇaiḥ.*

— Stotra Ratna-42

Sūtravatī is his consort. Viṣvaksena has four Nityasūris who are his immediate attendants and subordinates: and they are Gajānana, Jayatsena, Harivaktra and Kālaprakṛti. There are eight commanders fully armed with weapons and each with his own vehicle and retinue on attendance; and their names are—Kumūda, Kumudākṣa, Puṇḍarika, Vāmana, Śaṅkukarṇa, Sarvanetra, Sumukha and Supratīṣṭhita. Caṇḍa and Pracāṇḍa, Bhadra and Subhadra, Jaya and Vijaya, and Dhātā and Vidhātā—are eight Nityasūris who keep watch at the gates on the four sides of the Lord's mansion, two in each. There are divine lady attendants who attend on the Lord with milk-white chamaras in their hands. They are Vimalā, Utkarṣiṇī, Jñāna, Kriyā, Yoga, Prahvī, Satyā, Īśāna and Anugrahā. The first eight stand in the eight corners of the Lord's couch and the last in the centre.

All the above mentioned Nityas have some service or other assigned to them and they discharge it with great care and love. There are numberless other Nityas who are not doing service of any particular kind or nature. They behold the former with reverence and pride, and derive as much delight by that sight as that of those that are actually discharging that service. The joy of the Lord is their own joy and so long as the Lord is pleased they are also pleased and satisfied. There is no feeling of rivalry or jealousy in them. They do not for a moment think that some have the honour of doing a service which is denied to them. They derive greater joy by attending on those that serve the Lord direct. For it is the maxim of the Spiritual Universe that the joy one gets by being subservient and doing service to those who directly serve the Lord is in no way less, nay, is even more, than that of the latter. That is the secret of the doctrine of the master-servant relationship in the Spiritual World. The Śāstras declare that there is desire for mutual service there among the Nityas and every one takes pride in being subservient to another.

All the Nityas are of the same age as the Paramātmā as though in the bloom of youth. Their bodies are similar to that of the Paramātmā, composed of the sublime Śuddha Sattva material. Their heads are adorned by gem-set crowns, and their arms by Chakra and Śaṅkha (discus and conch). All of them are perfect souls in the supreme enjoyment of the Heavenly Bliss vouchsafed to them by the All-merciful Lord for all times without any reserve or restriction.

The Nityas may occasionally come down to this world of ours either with the Lord or by themselves. If they do so, it is by their own free will tuned and attuned to that of the Lord, and not by the power of Karma. They come down to assist and continue the work of the Lord for the redemption of the souls in bondage. The Ālvārs and the Ācāryas are said to be incarnations of one or other of these Nityas. When by their preachings and practice on the one hand and by composing literary pieces on the other, their work of redeeming the souls and establishing righteousness is over for the time, they withdraw into Śrī Vaikuṇṭha to their own place. It is true that they are not the victims to Karma when they are in this world. But having come to this world, they behave like the Lord Himself, as if they are ordinary human beings subject to the rules and restrictions, sorrows and sufferings of the world. In their case, it is only the semblance of suffering on the stage of the world like that of a consummate actor on the stage. All this they do only to please the Paramātmā which is their only end, whether they are there or here.

When the bound souls are redeemed by the grace of the Ācāryas and the Lord, they soar high and arrive at Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. There are Nityas in masculine and feminine forms who are ready to receive and welcome them and who lead them with great jubilation to the Lord. From that time onwards, all differences between the Nityas eternally living there and the Muktas newly arrived vanishes, and all of them are members of the great Fraternity of Souls in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha, who revel and delight in the enjoyment and service of the Supreme God Śrīman Nārāyaṇa.

### C. Īśvara-Tattva

#### B. Īśvara: The Universal Cause

*Anyāyādhīna-katyānam anyamaṅgulakārakam,  
jagannudānam advandvam dvandvam vandāmahevayam.*

*Lakṣmīkalyāṇa of Bhaṭṭar*

We extol the peerless Couple—Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa—whose auspiciousness does not depend on others, who confer auspiciousness of all others, and who are the cause of the Universe.



It has been stated (i) that there are three Tattvas or Realities—Cetana, Acetana and Īśvara;

(ii) that the Cetana (the Sentient Being or Ātmā) is of three kinds—souls in bondage, freed souls and ever-free souls—baddha, mukta and nitya; and

(iii) that the Acetana (or the non-sentient object) is classified under three heads—Prakṛti or Primordial Matter, Kālā or Time, and Śuddha Sattva, the pure transcendental substance.

The third Tattva is Īśvara. He is the Supreme Self or Paramātmā. He has under His control the essential nature, the continuance and the varied activities pertaining to the three kinds of Sentient Beings (Cetana) and the three kinds of non-sentient objects (Acetana)—(Svādhīna-trividha-cetanācetana-svarūpa-sthiti-pravṛtti-bheda).

The essential nature (Svarūpa) of Īśvara, on whom depends the existence of all substances, is Truth (Satyam), knowledge (Jñānam), Infiniteness (Anantam), Bliss (Ānandam) and Purity (Amalatvam). He is opposed to everything that is of the nature of a blemish and has hosts of auspicious qualities (Akhilaheya-pratyanīka and Kalyāṇa-guṇākara).

(1) Īśvara is the Soul or Ātmā of all substances because of three kinds of relationship that exist for ever between Him and them.

(2) Īśvara is the Cause of all things because of three kinds of activities that He adopts.

(3) The essential nature of Īśvara is absolutely different from that of all beings and objects other than Himself.

(4) Īśvara is connoted by all words as He is the Ātma of all substances.

(5) He is the Deity that is propitiated by all the rites and rituals laid down in the Scriptures; and He is the Deity that grants the fruits of all those acts.

(6) Īśvara is resorted to by the Mumukṣus—those that are desirous of release; and Īśvara is the object of attainment in the State of release. (Mokṣadaśa).

Thus is Īśvara revealed by the Upanishads of undisputed validity.

Now we shall explain in some detail every one of the above statements:

1. Īśvara is the Supreme Soul or Ātmā of all objects and things. This is due to the fact that there are three kinds of relationship that invariably exist between Him on the one hand, and the Cetana and the Acetana on the other. He always supports and directs them; and He is also their Master for whose purpose and benefit they always exist and act. All other substances are always supported and directed by Īśvara; and they exist to serve His purpose. So they are His Śarīra (body). These substances cannot exist without Him. So they are called inseparable attributes (Aprthak-siddha-viśeṣaṇa). They stand in the same relation to Īśvara as the qualities like beauty or purity stand with reference to a man. The only difference is that the latter come under the class of qualities (guṇa) while the former under that of substances (dravya). From a study of the nature of these substances and Īśvara, our Ācāryas have arrived at the definition of body and Soul in the following terms: 'A substance that exists solely for the purpose of another and that is always supported and directed by that other is its body; and, that other for whose purpose a substance exists, and which supports and controls it, is the Ātmā (Soul). The bodies of all living beings,—be they gods, men or animals—satisfy this definition of Śarīra; and the souls in them satisfy that of Ātmā. They are related as Śarīra' and Ātmā.

Both the body and Soul of all beings are Śarīra for Īśvara and He is their Ātmā. Without Him no substance can exist and without His will no action can take place. This relationship between Īśvara on the one hand as Ātmā, and the bodies and souls of all beings as His Śarīra on the other, is known as Body-Soul-Relationship (Śarīra-ātma-bhāva-sambandha). This doctrine is most important and unique in the system of Viśiṣṭādvaita.

2. Īśvara is the Cause of all substances because of three activities in Him. When He creates the world, He acts in three ways. Therefore He is said to be the three kinds of causes, viz., the sentient cause, the material cause and the auxiliary cause—Nimitta Kāraṇa, Upādāna Kāraṇa and Sahakāri kāraṇa.

Let us now try to understand what these causes are with reference to some object in our daily life, say a mud-pot. It is well-known that a mud-pot is made of clay and that a potter makes it. He uses a wheel, a stick and the like in the process of making the pot. The pot that is made by the potter is called the effect (Kārya). The potter, the clay, the wheel and the stick—all play some part or other in bringing the pot into existence; they are known as causes. But each one of them plays a different part and therefore goes by a different name. He is called the sentient cause or *Nimitta kāraṇa*. Clay is the material out of which the pot is moulded and it is known as the material cause or *Upādāna kāraṇa*. The clay, which exists in the causal state, continues to exist in the state of the effect (kārya), viz., the pot. But its form is not the same as before; it has undergone some modification. Clay, the material cause, is non-sentient; and so is the pot, the effect. When the potter wants to mould the clay into a pot, he puts a lump of clay on a wheel and rotates it with a stick. The wheel and the stick are helpful to the potter in making the pot and so they are also a kind of cause, but different from the other two. They are known as auxiliary causes or *Sahakāri kāraṇa*. Thus we find that there are three kinds of causes that go into action when an effect is produced.

The Śāstras declare that *Īśvara* is all the three kinds of causes in regard to the creation of the Universe at the outset. *Īśvara* is a *cetana* or a Sentient Being. He wills and creates the world even as the potter does the pot. So *Īśvara* is the Sentient Cause (or *Nimitta kāraṇa*) *Prakṛti* or the Primordial Matter is non-sentient substance and that alone can be the Material cause (*Upādāna Kāraṇa*) of the world which is also non-sentient. For as in the case of the clay and the pot, the material cause and its effect must be of the same nature i.e., non-sentient. But *Īśvara* is said to be the *Upādāna kāraṇa* or Material cause also.

Here a question may arise: *Īśvara* is a sentient being; how can He be the material cause of the world that is non-sentient? This is the answer:—We have explained before and established that all things and all beings are the *śarīra* or body of *Īśvara* and that He is their *Ātmā*; and that they cannot exist without Him, as they are inseparable attributes to Him. When we say 'Prakṛti is the cause', it means 'Prakṛti which is the *śarīra* of *Īśvara* is the cause.' *Prakṛti* is an inseparable attribute of *Īśvara*. All words, whatever their

ordinary denotations may be, such as 'cow' 'man' and the like, refer ultimately to Īśvara who is within them as their innermost soul. So the statement 'Prakṛti is the material cause' actually means that 'Prakṛti with Īśvara as its Ātmā is the cause.' It is equally correct to say that "Īśvara with Prakṛti as His śarīra is the material cause." It is the convention to put a word denoting the body in grammatical apposition with a word denoting the Ātmā, and hence the usage 'Prakṛti is Īśvara'. So we can say that Īśvara is the material cause. But what we actually mean then is that Īśvara, through His body Prakṛti, is the material cause. Defects, like transmutation or modification, which pertain to Prakṛti, will not touch Īśvara even though He is the Material Cause. The modifications stop with Prakṛti, the śarīra; they do not affect Īśvara, the soul, in much the same way as infancy, boyhood, youth and old age are all modifications of śarīra (the body) and do not touch the individual soul inside. He remains the same in all stages of man. The essential nature or svarūpa of Īśvara does not undergo any modification. So nothing of the nature of a blemish ever stains Īśvara even though He is the material cause, and it is only Prakṛti, His śarīra, that undergoes modifications.

And now to Īśvara as the Auxiliary cause. The creation, sustenance and destruction of the world take place at some point of time and are governed by the will of Īśvara. That is, Īśvara has chosen to adopt time as a cause in the creation etc. of the world. Time is not sentient and so it is not a sentient cause; it is not the material out of which the world is created and so it is not the material cause either. Therefore it is the third kind of cause—the auxiliary cause. Here again, Time is a substance which is the śarīra of Īśvara. The word 'Time' that denotes Kāla also connotes Īśvara who is its Ātmā. Hence the usage 'Kāla is Īśvara.' We say that Īśvara is also an auxiliary cause, because He is the Ātmā of Kāla which he adopts as an auxiliary cause.

To conclude: Īśvara is the sentient cause, because He is possessed of the will to create. He is the Material Cause, as He is the Ātmā of Prakṛti or Primordial Matter which is His śarīra. He is the Auxiliary Cause, because Time and the like which are adopted by Him as auxiliary causes are also His śarīra and His inseparable attributes. Therefore Īśvara is at once the three kinds of causes—Nimitta, Upādāna and Sahakāri kāraṇa of the world.

9. *Īśvara—Essential Nature and Qualities*

*Viśvam śubhāśraya vad-Īśa! vapustvadiyam  
 Sarvā giras-tvayī patanti tato'si sarvaḥ.  
 Sarve cā veda-vidhayaś-tvadanugrahārthāḥ  
 Sarvādhikas-tvam iti tattva-vidaś-tad-āhuḥ.*

—*Varadarāja-pañcāśat.*

All the World is, Lord, Thy form  
 As Thy body, full of charm;  
 All the words in Thee do end,  
 Thou, wherefore, all objects art;  
 To earn Thy favour is the goal  
 Of acts decreed by Ancient Lore;  
 God Supreme, indeed, Thou art,—  
 Thus proclaim the seers great.

It was stated that *Īśvara* is the *Śarīrī* or *Ātmā* or the Inner Soul of all objects, sentient and non-sentient, in the Universe, and they are His *Śarīra* or body. This inner relationship between the sentient and non-sentient objects (*Cetana* and *Acetana*) on the one hand and *Īśvara* on the other is known as the Body-Soul Relationship. It is regarded as the differentia or (*Pradhāna-pratītantra*) of the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* School of Philosophy. In this connection we shall, before proceeding further, make mention of some terms which are current in our philosophy and to which we may advert later. A substance that is a *śarīra* or body cannot exist without its *Ātmā* or soul; and therefore the body is called an inseparable attribute or *Apṛthaksiddha viśeṣaṇa* of the soul. In the same way, the *Cetana* and *Acetana* are the attributes or *Viśeṣaṇa* of *Īśvara*. *Īśvara*, their counterpart, is known as *Viśeṣya* or substratum. An inseparable attribute is also called a mode or *Prakāra*, and its counterpart *Prakāri*. The body is the mode or *prakāra* of the soul, which, therefore, is known as *Prakāri*. Both the body and the soul are the mode or *prakāra* of the *Paramātmā* who is the *prakāri* with reference to them. The finite self or *Jīvātmā* is both *prakāri* and *prakāra*.—*prakāri*, as he has the body as a mode, and *prakāra*, as he is the mode of *Īśvara*. It was also stated that with reference to the Universe, *Īśvara* is all the three kinds of causes, viz., the material cause, the sentient cause and the auxiliary cause (*Upādāna-kāraṇa*, *nimitta-kāraṇa* and *Sahakāri-kāraṇa*). And now to the *svarūpa* or the essential nature of *Īśvara*.

3. Īśvara is Truth, Knowledge, Bliss and Infinite-Satya, Jñāna, Ānanda and Ananta. The essential nature or svarūpa of Īśvara is absolutely different from that of all substances other than Himself. The Acetana or non-sentient matter undergoes modifications in its essential nature as the clay that gets changed into pots and pitchers. This is called modification in essential nature or svarūpa-vikāra. The Cetana or sentient being does not undergo any change in his essential nature, but his qualities change. His attributive knowledge gets limited by Avidyā and karma, and it contracts and expands. This is known as modification in quality or svabhāva-vikāra. These two kinds of modifications or vikāra, in essential nature and that in quality are not found in Īśvara. He is Satyam or Truth, because He does not undergo any change, either in svarūpa or svabhāva. He is Jñāna or Knowledge, because his essential nature is self-luminous and does not depend on any external aid for being so. He is Bliss because of his perfect and unexcelled blissful nature.

Īśvara is Infinite or Ananta. He is neither bound by space, nor limited by time, nor circumscribed by objects. Īśvara is omnipresent and it cannot be said of Him that He is here, and not there. So He is not limited by space. There was no time in the past when Īśvara did not exist, and there will be no time in the future when He will not exist. It goes without saying that He does exist in the present. He is ever-existent, and so not limited by time.

Īśvara is not limited by objects either. We can speak of Him in the following terms: 'Man is Īśvara, the cow is Īśvara, and all things are Īśvara'. That is to say there is no object in the world which cannot be put in grammatical apposition with Īśvara. The same cannot be said with reference to the other things in the world. Such statements as 'The man is a cow' or 'The cow is a bird' do not make sense. Such a grammatical co-ordination is possible in the case of Īśvara, because He is immanent in everything. He supports and directs everything from within for His own purpose. He is their Ātmā and they are His śarīra. We can rightly say that all things are Īśvara. Hence it is stated that Īśvara is infinite in every way: He is not limited by space, time or object.

Īśvara is Amala or free from all defects. He is often referred to as being Heya-pratyanika or opposed to everything that is of the nature of blemish. It means that not only is He, by nature, free

from all blemishes, but He is also capable of removing blemishes in others. These five qualities of being true, knowledge, blissful, infinite and blemishless are called the Svarūpa-nirūpaka dharma because they define the nature of Īśvara and distinguish Him from all other things.

Besides these there are in Īśvara hosts of innumerable qualities—all perfect and auspicious. These are known as Nirūpita-svarūpa-viśeṣaṇa or qualities that are in Him when His svarūpa has been defined. These are classified under two heads as svarūpaguṇa and vīrahaguṇa or qualities of nature and qualities of form. Knowledge, strength, lordship and the like are svarūpaguṇas; beauty, fragrance, lustre and the like are vīrahaguṇas. All the qualities are natural to Him and are of unsurpassed excellence. Though all the qualities are ever present in Him, He manifests some quality or other as occasion demands. For instance, knowledge and power are manifested when Īśvara creates the world, and Mercy and kindness when He saves the devotees. Among the innumerable qualities, six are considered specially important as they are said to contain all the other qualities within themselves; because of them Īśvara is known in the Śāstras as ṣaḍguṇyavapuḥ. The six qualities are: Jñāna or Knowledge; Bala or strength, Aiśvarya or lordship, vīrya or virility, Śakti or potency and Tejaḥ or prowess. The possession of all these countless qualities of un-excelled perfection and auspiciousness as well as His essential nature of being true, blissful, infinite and flawless distinguish Īśvara from all other objects in the universe.

4. Īśvara is connoted by all words as He is the Ātma or Inner Soul of all substances. In other words, He is Sarva-śabda-vācya or the primary and direct meaning of all words. This is due to the unique doctrine of the Body-Soul-Relationship or Śarīra-sarīri-bhāva-sambandha that exists between Īśvara and all other things. The individual soul is related to Īśvara as an inseparable attribute or (Aprthak-siddha-viśeṣaṇa) like the light to a luminous body, the fragrance to a flower and the body to the Jīvātmā. The non-sentient world of matter is likewise an attribute of Īśvara as it cannot be apprehended apart from Him. Īśvara is therefore the Viśeṣya or substratum; and the matter and the self are Viśeṣaṇa or attribute.

The Jāti or genus is vitally related to the Vyakti or individual, and the guṇa or quality is embodied in the guṇi, its subject. Terms

denoting the genus and quality, or Jāti and guṇa, connote also the individual and the object (vyakti and guṇī) according to the rule of grammatical co-ordination. "Whenever a thing (whether species or quality or substance) has existence as a mode only—owing to its proof, existence and conception being inseparably connected with something else-, the words denoting it enter into co-ordination with other words denoting the same substance as characterised by other attributes." As the body is the mode of the embodied self, a word which denotes the body will connote also the individual Soul or Ātmā in the body. Such words as god, man, cow and bird denote not only the respective configurations, but the individual souls also to which the bodies belong. Likewise words connoting the Prakṛti and Puruṣa (non-sentient matter and sentient soul) connote also the Paramātmā or the Highest Self of whom they are modes or Prakāra. The body is a mode of the Jīvātmā, and the latter is a mode of the Paramātmā. Thus the Jīvātmā is both Śarīrī and Śarīra—Śarīrī, as he ensouls the body, and śarīra, as he is ensouled by Īśvara. All substances, sentient and non-sentient, are the modes of the Paramātmā; because the Paramātmā with His energising will enters into the aggregate of matter with the individual soul as His śarīra, and becomes the soul and the material things, and thus evolves the heterogeneity of names and forms that constitute the Universe. Owing to the entry of the Paramātmā into the Jīva as his Antaryāmi or Inner Ruler and the evolution of names and forms, each term that denotes the body or Śarīra of the Paramātmā connotes also the Paramātmā, the Śarīrī.

Those who have not studied Vedānta do not realize that all non-sentient things and all individual souls have the Paramātmā as their Inner Soul. They think that the signification of words is confined to the respective objects which however, are only a portion of what is expressible by them. Those who have studied Vedānta are on the other hand aware, that, since all things are the body or śarīra of the Paramātmā and have Him as their Inner Ruler or Soul, all words signify Īśvara who has all substances as His modes or attributes (Prakāra). As all substances and Īśvara are thus vitally related as body and soul, all of them can be co-ordinated with Īśvara, and all words put in grammatical apposition (Sāmānādhikaraṇya) with Him, as for example, 'I am Īśvara', 'You are Īśvara', 'Man is Īśvara' and 'The cow is Īśvara'. The term 'You are Īśvara' states the Vedāntic truth that the



Paramātmā is the same as the inner self or Śarīrī of the Jīvātmā connected with the body connoted by the term 'You'. It stresses the intimacy between the Paramātmā, the Supreme Self and the Jīvātmā, the individual self. As Īśvara is thus the Ātmā or the Inner Soul of all substances, He is connoted directly by all words i.e., sarva-śabda-vācya.

### 10. *Īśvara—The Ultimate Object of Worship*

*Sakalāgamānām niṣṭhā*

*Sakala-surāṇām apyantara ātmā,*

*Sakalaphalānām prasūtiḥ*

*Sakalajanānām samah khalu natasatyatvam.*

—Achyuta Sataka, 20.

The end supreme of all the Vedas sacred,  
The Soul immanent of even all the gods,  
The source that yields the fruits of diverse kinds,  
And to all the beings just and impartial;  
Thou art, O Lord, the True to the Devout.

5. Īśvara is the Supreme Deity that is propitiated by all the rites and rituals laid down by the Scriptures and that grants the fruit of all such acts.

Every man in this world has some desire or other and tries to realize it. Such desires have been classified under four heads as *Dharma* or Righteousness, *Artha* or Wealth, *Kāma* or love and *Mokṣa* or Salvation. Where are we to look for the means of attaining these desires? The Vedas are common to all human beings and therefore, like a loving mother, they cater to the wishes of all of them. If one wants a son or a cow in this world, or happiness in Svarga, one has only to turn to the Veda; and it prescribes the means, viz., a sacrifice. Gods like Indra, Agni, Rudra or Varuṇa are propitiated by the sacrifices and they bestow the fruit on the one that performs the sacrifice. But is it the fact that these gods are propitiated and they themselves confer the fruit? It is not so. We have established already that the Paramātmā is the object of connotation of all words; words like Indra, Agni and Rudra denote first the gods who go by those names and who are the modes of the Paramātmā; and the words ultimately connote the Paramātmā who is their Inner Ruler. So the propitiation of these gods is actually the propitiation of the

Paramātmā. In the world we see that it is the man who feels honoured even though the garland is put on his body or even on the coat he has put on. To give an illustration from our religious rites: we propitiate the Pitṛs or the Manes of the departed ancestors by the performance of Śraddha, i.e., the ceremony on the death anniversary of deceased parents. The offerings are to be made on that occasion with the chanting of the mantras to the Pitṛs; but they are actually given to the person before us representing the Pitṛs. The ultimate purpose of the offering of the consecrated food is the satisfaction of the Pitṛs, though it incidentally affords satisfaction to the Brahmins also who officiate and stand for the Pitṛs. In the same way the Paramātmā, who is the Inner Soul of all gods is propitiated by all sacrifices, though the gods also may derive some satisfaction. That this is the truth is vouchsafed to us by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad Gītā* in the following words:

*Aham hi sarva-yajñānām bhoktā ca prabhureva ca.*

[I am, indeed, the enjoyer of the oblations offered (to the gods) in all sacrifices and I am again the master (that grants the fruits through those gods as the medium).]

6. Īśvara is resorted to by the Mumukṣus—those that are desirous of release; and Īśvara again is the object of attainment in the state of Release.

All the Upanishads in one voice declare that Mokṣa is the highest of all the human goals. The attainment of Mokṣa alone must therefore be the goal of the endeavour of all beings possessed of correct knowledge and discrimination. Again the Paramātmā is the only God who can confer Mokṣa or Salvation on those who adopt the means for its attainment. The means or the Upāya for Mokṣa is the performance of one or other of the Brahma Vidyās taught by the Upanishads. Only those persons are said to be eligible to adopt the Brahma Vidyās who possess some qualifications. And for those that are bereft of the qualifications, there has been prescribed another Upāya which goes by the names of Śaraṇāgati or Prapatti.

We shall take up later this topic and deal in some detail with the Brahma Vidyās or Upāsanās, the qualifications of a person for

adopting them, and also about Śaraṇāgati, the chief and important subject for us, men of less knowledge and lesser ability.

Paramātmā is also the object of attainment in the State of Release. That is because the Paramātmā or the Para Brahman is the one object that exists for all time and it is only He that can be therefore attained at all times. Other objects or lesser gods exist only for a limited period and so they cannot be the eternal goal. Again these gods are under the control of Puṇya or Pāpa Karma and they have first to release themselves from the bondage of Karma. Moreover they attain their status by doing severe penance and austerities and pleasing the Paramātmā who is their Overlord and who grants them power and status. Eventhough they have been granted the power of satisfying some of the desires of their votaries, the power of granting Mokṣa rests with the Paramātmā alone. Other gods may act as intermediaries and lead their devotees to the Paramātmā so that they may earn His favour and get Release or Salvation.

The Paramātmā has a divine and auspicious form, Divya-maṅgala-vigraha, which is said to be the support of all the twenty-four Tattvas or Realities which are found in Him as ornaments and weapons. Vedānta Deśika has beautifully described this form of the Lord in a verse in *Rahasyatrayasāra* as follows:

The Self or the soul is the superior gem Kaustubha; the eternal Prakṛti or Primordial Matter is the mole on the Lord's body Śrīvatsa; the Tattva known as Mahat is His club Kaumodakī; knowledge and ignorance are His sword Nandaka and its sheath respectively; the ahaṅkāras are His bow and conch Śārṅga and Pāñcajanya; the mind is His discus cakṛa called Sudarśana; the five jñānendriyas and the five karmendriyas are arrows; the (five) tanmātras and the (five) bhūtas or elements form His Vanamālā (known as Vaijayantī); Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the object of description in the Veda, which is in the form of Garuḍa, is endowed with these and protects all from the top of Hastigiri.

—*Tattvatrayacintanādikāram in Tamil*

## 11. Īśvara—His Manifestations

There are five aspects or manifestations of the Paramātmā, every one of which is endowed with ornaments and weapons as detailed above. The five aspects are:

1. Para or the Transcendent;
2. Vyūha or the Emanating;
3. Vibhava or the Incarnating;
4. Antaryāmi or the Immanent; and
5. Arcāvatāra or the form of the consecrated image.

Of these the Para-rūpa or the Transcendent aspect is Śrīman Nārāyaṇa Himself variously called by the names Pārabrahma, Paramātmā, Paramapuruṣa, Vāsudeva etc. He is in the company of His Divine Consorts Śrī, Bhūmi and Nīla. He is four-armed, adorned by the Divine Weapons Cakra, Śaṅkha etc., and bedecked with the Divine Ornaments crown, Kaustubha, Vaijayantī etc. Beaming with His beatific presence, He is seated on Adīṣeṣa spread on the throne which is poised on its legs Dharma etc., and which is placed in the gemmed pavilion in the Divine Hall of Thousand Pillars in that World of Eternal Splendour known as Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. Jaya, Vijaya etc., are the sentries; Kumuda, Kumadākṣa and others are the city-keepers, all of them divinely adorned and armed. Śrīman Nārāyaṇa—the Pararūpa—is the object of enjoyment of the Ever-free Souls, Ananta, Garuḍa and the like as well as the Freed Souls who go there shedding their bonds. He has numberless qualities, some associated with His nature as the Supreme Being and some which make Him easily accessible to all.

The second of the Five Manifestations of the Paramātmā is Vyūha or Emanations. The vyūhas are said to be four in number: Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The para-rūpa is the source from which the vyūha emanates; and among the vyūhas, the preceding one is the source of the succeeding one. Though all the auspicious qualities inhere in them, still for purposes of meditation it is stated that every one of them has specific qualities and activities. Vāsudeva is endowed with all the six chief qualities: Jñāna or Knowledge, Śakti or ability, bala, or strength, aiśvarya or lordship, Vīrya or virility, and Tejās or splendour. He is the object of blissful enjoyment for those that have attained mokṣa. Saṁkarṣaṇa, is endowed with knowledge and

strength; He promulgates the śāstras, and destroys the Universe. Pradyumna is possessed of Lordship and virility; He creates the Universe and makes Dharma prevail. Aniruddha, with the two qualities of virility and splendour, protects the world and propounds the Truth. This has been beautifully expressed in one śloka by Śrī Bhaṭṭar in his *Śrīraṅgarāja Stava* (2.39):

*Śāḍguṇyāt vāsudevaḥ para iti sa bhavān  
mukta bhogyo balāḍhyāt,  
Bodhāt saṁkarṣaṇastvam harasi vitanuṣe  
Śāstram aiśvarya-vīryāt,  
Pradyumnas-sarga-dharmau nayasi ca  
bhagavan śakti-tejo aniruddho-  
Bibhrāṇaḥ pāsi tattvam gamayasi ca  
tatha vyūhya raṅgāḍhirāja*

*Guṇaiḥ ṣaḍbhis-tvetaiḥ prathamataramūrtis-tava babhau  
tatas-tisras-teṣām triyuga! yugalair-hi tribhir-abhūh.  
Vyāvasthā yā caisā nanu varāda! sāvīṣkṛtīvaśāt  
Bhavān sarvatraiva tvaganītamahāmaṅgalaguṇaḥ.*

*Varadarāja stava—16*

Lord Varada possessed of three two-fold (six) qualities! Thy original form shone with these six attributes; then came three forms of Thine which had, each of them, a couple of these attributes. This restriction (in regard to the number of attributes in each) is because of the manifestation of those qualities only. But Thou art always and everywhere possessed of innumerable sublime and auspicious qualities.

Though the Vyūhas are four, it is stated by the Śāstras in some places that the Vyūhas are three. Then they count the Para Vāsudeva (or the Supreme form) and the Vyūha Vāsudeva (or the first Emanated form) as one. This is due to the fact that both of them alike have all the six qualities. On the other hand the other three Vyūhas have each only a couple of these qualities. The Śāstras also declare that in the four yugas,—Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali—the bodies of all the four Vyūhāvatāras assume respectively the four colours—white, ruddy, tawny and blue.

## (ii) (b) Vyūhāntara

There are twelve other forms known as Vyūhāntara which emanate from the four Vyūha forms, three from each. Keśava, Nārāyaṇa and Mādhava take their origin from Vyūha-Vāsudeva. Govinda, Viṣṇu and Madhusūdana come out of Saṁkarshaṇa. Trivikrama, Vāmana and Śrīdhara are born of Pradyumna. Hṛṣīkeśa., Padmanābha and Dāmodara emanate from Anirudha. Every one of the twelve deities has some special features and weapons and is to be meditated upon having a fixed place on the human body where the twelve caste-marks (Ūrdhva-puṇḍra) are to be worn. And here is the description of the twelve vyūhāntaras: Keśava is of golden hue and has four cakras (or discuses) as weapons in His four hands. Nārāyaṇa has the blue colour of the cloud and four conches. Mādhava is represented as being gem-coloured and wielding four maces. Govinda is moon-coloured and bears four bows. Viṣṇu has the colour of the lotus-filament and holds four ploughshares in his hands. Madhusūdana is lotus-coloured and is characterised by the possession of four pestles. Trivikrama sparkles like fire and wears four swords. Vāmana has the hue of the rising sun and is bedecked by four vajras (thunderbolts). Śrīdhara, lotus-coloured, bears four shields. The colour of Hṛṣīkeśa, is like that of the lightning and He has four hammers. Padmanābha has the lustre of the sun and wields five weapons. Dāmodara, with the colour of the insect Indragopa (or Silk-worm), is represented as having four nooses in four hands. The forms, the colour and the weapons of the twelve deities and the parts of the human body over which they preside on the painted caste-marks have been described by Śrī Deśika in a Tamil poem which goes by the name of *Paṇṇirunāmam*. Figures answering to the above description are found carved at the top of the wall near the western entrance to Candra-puṣkarīṇi (the sacred Tank) in the temple of Śrī Rāṅganātha at Śrīraṅgam.

The four vyūhas are meditated upon in four divine planes with attributes and qualities suited to each. The four planes, which are like the four states in the life of the human beings, are:

1. Jāgrat or the Waking State, when the senses are functioning; 2. Svapna or dream state, when the mind alone is active; 3. Suṣuṭi, or the state of dreamless sleep, when even the mind does not function.

4. Turiya or the fourth, when even the breathing is suspended as in a state of unconsciousness.

The differences arising from planes like the waking state have been summarized by Bhaṭṭar in his *Śrīraṅgarāja Stava* thus:

*Jāgrat-svapna-atyalasa-turiya*  
*prāya-dhyātr-kramavad upāsyaḥ.*  
*Svāmin! tattad-guṇa-paribarhaḥ*  
*cāturvyūham vahaṣi caturdhā.*

O Lord! Of those that meditate on Thee, some are like those in the waking state, some like those that dream in sleep, others like those that sleep without dreams, and others still are like those that have fallen into a swoon. In the same way, O Lord, Thou art in four forms and dividest Thyself into four forms and are meditated upon with attributes and weapons suited to each.

The idea of this śloka is based on the concept of the 'Viśākha-stambha' described in the Pañcarātra Saṁhitās like *Sātvata Saṁhitā* and the *Lakṣmi Tantra*.

In the region of Eternal Glory (Nitya vibhūti), there is a huge column constituted of Śuddha Sattvam. It is a special form in which Bhagavān manifests Himself there. This column or pillar is called Viśākha-yūpa. The column consists of four parts called respectively Jāgrat (the waking state), Svapna (the dream) Suṣupti (dreamless sleep), and turiya (the fourth stage) counting from the bottom upwards. In the part called Jāgrat-sthāna, which is somewhere above the base of the column, there are four divine forms on the four sides called respectively Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha facing the east, the south, the west and the north, and shining like branches around that part of the column. This collection of four forms is called 'Jāgrat-Vyūha'. The activity of this Vyūha is creation, maintenance and destruction of the world. The four forms are bright in colours white, red and the like. They have also arms or weapons.

Above this part of the column is the part called 'Svapna-sthāna'. Here too there are four divine forms Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha shining like branches and facing as before the east, the south, the west and the north. This collection of four Vyūhas in the second part of the column from

below is called Svapna-Vyūha. These four forms have no activities like creation and maintenance, but have only the will to do so. Their colours, too, are not so bright as those of the lower Vyūhas. They have weapons, but no banners and other accessories.

Above the Svapna-sthāna which is the second part from below, is the third part or Sthāna called 'Suṣupti-sthāna'. Here too there are four divine forms with the same names as in the two other parts already described and in the same order. This collection of four forms is called 'Suṣupti-Vyūha'. These forms have neither activities, nor even the will or the desire to act. They have just the experience of their own bliss and nothingelse. In the form of Vāsudeva which is like a branch of the column shooting on the eastern side, there is no such thing as a body with limbs and the like, and it shines with all the six qualities. The other three forms, Saṁkarṣaṇa and the like on the other three sides have a body with hands, feet and the like. But they have no weapons; on the palms they bear lines resembling the conch and the weapons. These forms have no colours.

The uppermost or fourth part of the column known as 'Turiya-sthāna' has also similar four forms with the same names as in the former parts. This collection of four is the Turiya Vyūha. They have no bodies with limbs and the like, but resemble the Vāsudeva-form of the Suṣupti Vyūha. They have no activities, no will, no weapons and no lines on the palm resembling weapons. All the six qualities shine in the form called Vāsudeva, and the other three have, each, only two of these qualities.

The names Jāgrat, Svapna, Suṣupti and Turiya are given to them on the analogy of these states in man in the ordinary world, according to the greater or lesser activity found in each. The Turiya state is like that in a swoon when even the breath is suspended, whereas in the Suṣupti state the man just breathes in or breathes out; in the Svapna his external senses cease to act, only the mind is active; in the Jāgrat state both the mind and the external senses act.

These four parts with four Vyūhas in each correspond to the four stages of development that may be found in the worshipper who meditates on them. On the lowest stage of meditation, there is no full control of the external senses and the mind. In the second



stage of development, control of the external senses has been obtained, but not of the mind. In the next stage, the mind too has been controlled and the man who meditates is seen just breathing in and breathing out with no other activity or sign of life. In the last or perfect development of meditation, he is like one in a swoon, not even breathing in or out.

In the temple of Lord Raṅganātha at Śrīraṅgam, the pillars of Arjuna Maṇḍapa (in front of the *Sanctum Sanctorum*) and of Revatī Maṇḍapa (to the east) have been so carved as to represent the four stages mentioned above and are therefore suggestive of the Viśākha-stambha described in the *Lakṣmī Tantra*.<sup>1</sup>

### (iii) (a) *Vibhava—Incarnations*

The next is Vibhava-avatāra or Incarnation. Vibhava is that manifestation of the Paramātmā in which He comes down with forms similar to those of the creatures in the world, like fish, tortoise etc. He lives amongst them and moves with them as one of their own species. The Lord acts and lives, enjoys and suffers as they do. But He is not subject to the law of Karma as other beings are; He comes out of his own free will for the redemption of the world. Those, who are not in the know of things, take or mistake Him as one of their genus subject to Karma. So they do not show Him the honour due to Him as God. But saints and sages, who are aware of the true nature of the Incarnations, are lost in admiration and devotion. They are moved to tears when they think of the generous and merciful nature of the Lord, who, though Supreme, descends to the level of the meanest creature and chooses to live amidst them as one of themselves. Padmanābha and the like are other Incarnations and they are more than thirty in number.

Out of them ten are chosen with a purpose and grouped together as Daśavatāra. They are: (1) Matsya or Fish; (2) Kūrma or tortoise; (3) Varāha or Boar; (4) Narasimha or Man-Lion; (5) Vāmana or Dwarf; (6) Paraśurāma or Rāma with the axe; (7) Rāma; (8) Balarāma or Rāma with the Plough; (9) Kṛṣṇa; and (10) Kalki. The Paramātmā came as Matsya or Fish in order to recover the Vedas seized and carried away by the Asura and to restore them to Brahmā for promulgating them. The Kūrma avatāra or Tortoise Incarnation was taken by Him to keep in position the Mandara Mountain when it began to sink while

churning the Milky Ocean. Then He also helped the gods get the nectar. He incarnated Himself as Varāha or the Boar to slay the Asura Hiranyākṣa who carried away Bhūmi Devī to the Pātāla Loka and rescue her from his hands. He sprang forth as Narasimha out of a pillar in order to save the boy Devotee Prahlāda from the tortures of his own father, the Asura, Hiranyakaśipu. He took birth as Vāmana in order to restore his kingdom to Indra which had been wrested from him by the Asura chief, Mahābali, and also to purify the world with the holy waters of the Gaṅgā flowing from His feet. He came and moved about as Paraśurāma for exterminating the haughty Kṣatriyas who had become wicked and tyrannical. The Paramātmā took birth as Rāma to save the world from the havoc done by Rāvaṇa by killing him and also rescue Sītā from his hands. He was again born as Kṛṣṇa to destroy the Asuras and teach the means of obtaining Him through the Gītā Śāstra. The Kalki incarnation, which is yet to come, is intended to root out Adharma which will become widespread and to establish Dharma once again in power.

### (iii) (b) Vibhavāntara

The forms that came out of the Vibhava avatāra are known as Vibhavāntara or other Incarnations. The body of Trivikrama which grew from Vāmana and the several forms that Kṛṣṇa assumed at the time of the Rāsa Kṛidā so as to be by the side of every one of the thousands of Gopīs come under this class. Sometimes the Lord enters into some Jīvas with His own specific form and into others with His energy (Śakti), and accomplishes wonderful things. They are known as Aṁśavatāra or Āveśa-avatāra. In the Vibhavāvatāra the Lord, according to His will, conceals or manifests qualities suitable to, and necessary for, the fulfilment of the mission undertaken by Him. The Lord disappears from this Earth when the purpose has been accomplished.

### (iv) Antaryāmyavatāra or The Immanent Phase

The Antaryāmi avatāra or the Immanent Phase of the Lord abides in the regions of the heart of the embodied Soul and is realizable only by Yogins. Though He dwells there as the eternal partner of the Soul, He is not tainted by its defects. This form is subtle and perfect in every way, and is beautifully portrayed by Nammālvār as follows:

“The Lord, in truth, blue and generous like a cloud;  
With eyes ruddy and large, and lips rosy and smooth,  
With teeth that are white and gleaming,  
With ears bedecked by ear-rings dangling and beaming;  
And with a crown on head sparkling with gems;  
Four arms He has adorned by the shining bow, the conch and  
the mace, the sword and the Discus;  
Thus resides the Lord in the heart of mind, His slave.”

—*Tiruvaimozhi, 8-8-1.*

Meditation on this form of the Lord has been prescribed as the means which enables those who wish to enter into the meditation of the Divine All-pervading svarūpa of the Lord *i.e.*, the Sarvāntaryāmi. Therefore this form is known as Antaryāmi Rūpa.

## 12. *Īśvara—Arcāvatāra*

It was stated that Paramātmā, out of His innate Mercy, manifests Himself in five forms as Para, Vyūha and others. In moments of moral crisis in history He comes down in the Vibhava or incarnational form with a view to arrest the progress of social disruption, to redeem the sinner from his sinfulness and to commune with the devotee who thirsts for His presence.

The Arcāvatāra or Consecrated image is the fifth of the manifestations. The devotees mould a beautiful image of Viṣṇu with lovely face and form out of gold, silver or any other metal, or even stone.

*Surupām pratimām viṣṇaḥ  
prasannavadanekṣaṇām  
Kṛtvā'ātmanah prītikarīm  
suvarṇa-rajatādibhiḥ.*

— *Viṣṇudharma, 103—16*

The image may be like that of Para Vāsudeva, or Vyūhaṣ (Emanations), or Vibhavas (Incarnations) according to the choice and taste of the devotees. When the image is installed in a temple, in a house or in any other place, and when it is consecrated by Mantras according to the Śāstras, the Infinite Paramātmā takes a similar form and enters into the infinite forms without losing His Infinity and Lordship. Out of His own will He assumes the form

and name which the devotee chooses to give Him and mixes with the earthly material of the image to gratify the devotee. He is the image and not in the image. His form is not a product of Karma, but is self-determined and self-evolved. It is Aprākṛta and is not affected by the changes of mundane matter.

Unlike the Vibhava-avatāra which appears at one time and then disappears after the achievement of the purpose, the Arcā is a permanent incarnation which is with us now and here in the world of sense-perception. It is not like the Vyūha in a far-off place beyond our reach. Nor is it removed from us by time like the Vibhava—Rāma or Kṛṣṇa Incarnations—which took place in times of yore. This divine Arcā form is the concrete embodiment of the will of God to save the humanity and of His Mercy to redeem it. So long as there are souls to be redeemed the Arcā continues.

There are several varieties of the Arcāvatāra known as Svayaṁvyakta, Divya and so on. Svayaṁvyakta means 'Self-manifest.' That is to say, the Transcendental Beauty beyond the phenomenal world enters into the chosen forms of Prakṛti as Vighraha by Itself, i.e., without being installed or consecrated by others. It is considered supreme amongst the Arcā forms, because by its very presence it sheds its power and sanctity over a wider area. It is capable of redeeming even those who dwell far away from the *sanctum sanctorum*. Not only those who are near, but those at a distance also come within the range of His Mercy. The images of the Gods at Śrīraṅgam, Tirupati, Kanchi, Śrīmuṣṇam and the like come under this class. The sālagrāma forms that are daily worshipped in houses and temples are also svayaṁvyakta. They are taken from the bed of the Gaṇḍakī river in Nepal, where they are found, and are straightway worshipped without any special consecration.

Some images have been installed and consecrated by the gods like Brahmā, Rudra, Indra and so on. The manifestation of the Paramātmā in such places is known as Divya or of divine origin.

Ārsha is another variety of the Arcā which owes its origin to the consecration by the sages, Mārkaṇḍeya, Bhṛgu and the like. There is yet another kind known as Mānuṣa. They are those that are installed and consecrated by ordinary human beings like us. The unique feature of the Arcāvatāra is that there is a harmonious

blending of the qualities which are generally opposed to one another. For example the Arcā is both the Śeṣi and Śeṣa—Master and property. It is our Śeṣi or master, as it is the object of our adoration and worship and commands our respect; at the same time it is śeṣa or possession, as we claim it as our share in a property along with other objects where there is a division of property between brothers or relatives. It is in the Arcā that the tenderness and compassion of the Lord are seen to the fullest extent beside His majesty and lordship. Such self-limitation enriches the Divine nature instead of conditioning it or diminishing its contents. Therefore the Arcā in general is considered to be of greater value for us than the other forms of God.

The Ālvārs and Ācāryas have sung about the greatness of Arcā and also about its beauty and accessibility. Their love for the Arcā is almost a passion. They go to the extent of saying that they would prefer to continue in this world in spite of all the attendant miseries therein if the enjoyment of the Arcā is vouchsafed to them here, and that they would never think of a world beyond, however pleasing it may be—be that world Svarga or even Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. The Scriptures declare that the worship of, and meditation on, the Arcāvatāra dispels all the sins of a person and leads him easily to Mokṣa; for the Arcā is none other than the Supreme God, Para Brahman.

There is a classic śloka of Bhaṭṭar in his *Śrīraṅgarāja Stava* which portrays the distinctive excellence of Arcā in the form of Lord Raṅganātha, who, the Vaishṇavites hold, is the root and representative of all the Arcās in the world.

“O Lord of Ranga famed! Countless are Thy qualities  
 sure;  
 And all of them they say, are good and pure;  
 Wherefore, births numberless Thou dost take.  
 Them, for the nonce, leave we shall.  
 Condescend Thou dost, and indeed descend  
 To dwell on Earth in temples big,  
 In tiny houses and lonely bowers,  
 In all such places where Thee they choose to call.  
 True, Thou comest, our worship, here, to accept;  
 But discomforts to Thee do come in hundreds there,  
 Which, without murmur, Thou dost endure.

Nay, even more: into the hands of those that worship,  
 Abandon Thou dost Thy self and all of Thine.  
 And upto them dost look for Thy existence entire,—  
 A delight in this dost Thou take for ever.  
 When they, of tender hearts do think of this, Thy nature,  
 Lost are they in wonder and praise;  
 Their hearts do melt and flow;  
 And tears of joy and pride from their eyes do stream.”

*Āstām te guṇarāśivat guṇaparivāhātmanām janmanām  
 Samkhyā bhaumaniketaneṣvapi kuṭikuṇjeṣu raṅgeśvara.  
 Arcyas sarvasahiṣnur arcakaparādhinākhilātmasthitiḥ  
 Prīṇiṣe hrdayālubhis-tava tataḥ śilājjaḍibhūyate.*

Before concluding this chapter we would like to advert once again to an important fact about these manifestations of the Lord, which are known as Avatāra Rahasya or the Mystery of the Avatāra. In every one of the five manifestations, viz., Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antaryāmi and Arcā, the Paramātmā has a transcendent, suprasensuous, divine and auspicious form. These forms bear on them all the Tattvas like the Puruṣa, Prakṛti and so on in the form of weapons and ornaments. The forms are all real and not illusory. Knowledge and other qualities of Īśvara are perfect in them and they do not undergo contraction. Śuddha Sattva is the substance that constitutes the body of Īśvara in Avatāra. The reason for the Avatāra is Lord's will and not Karma. The purpose is the protection of the good and the destruction of the evil. The time of manifestation is the time when there is a moral crisis in society. Such is the Mystery of the Avatāra.

Such is the Mystery of the Avatāra which has been revealed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa and beautifully summarized by Śrī Vedānta Deśika as follows:

*Avatārasya satyatvam ajahat-sva-svabhāvatā,  
 Śuddhasattva mayatvam ca svecchāmātranidānatā.  
 Dharmaglānau samudāyaḥ sādhusaṁrakṣa-nārthatā,  
 Iti janmarahasyam vo vetti nāsyā punarbhavaḥ.*

He who knows the secret of incarnation to consist in its being real; in the incarnation continuing in its real nature (as Bhagavān) though incarnating in lower forms; in its being constituted of the

(transcendental) substance called Śuddha Sattva; in its being caused only by Bhagavān's own will or desire (and not by Karma);

In its occurrence at a time when there is decline of dharma; and in its being occasioned for the purpose of protecting the good—(he who knows all this) will never be born again.

Again the Lord is always with Lakṣmī. His Consort, who in every form and in all situations, participates in all His actions. In all the acts of the Lord there is always the sanction as well as the co-operation of Lakṣmī. The creation will cease to be a recreation or Kṛidā if there is no unanimity between the Two—Īśvara and Īśvari of the world. She follows Him in all His Avatāras taking a suitable form. She is inseparable from Him like the fragrance from the flower, like the lustre from the Sun. The Two together rule the world and redeem it. Īśvara rules by law and Lakṣmī rules by love. The love of law and the law of love are vitally intertwined in the divine nature. As the link of love Lakṣmī mediates between the Lord who is omnipotent and the Jiva who is impotent, and transforms the majesty of Law into the might of Mercy. She has supernal beauty and sweetness. She lures the Lord by her beauty and turns Him into the saviour; she draws the sinner by her sweetness and transforms him into the penitent seeker after pardon. So it is the conclusion of the Śāstras that the Two together are the ground of existence, means of attainment and goal of endeavour—Tattva, Hita and Puruṣārtha. The Divya Dampatis or the Divine Couple are—Śeṣi Dampati and Śaraṇya Dampati, or the Twin-Masters and the Twin-Saviours of the Universe.

### 13. *Īśvara—The Supreme Deity*

*Sāmānya-buddhi-janakāśca sad-ādi-śabdāḥ  
tattvāntara-bhrama-kṛtaśca śivādi-vācaḥ.  
Nārāyaṇe tvayi kariṣa! vahanti ananyam  
anvartha-vṛtti-parikalpitam aikakaṇṭhyaṁ.*

—Varadaraja Pañcāsati-15.

Sat and the like words give rise to a knowledge which signifies a generic object (as the cause of the Universe); Śiva and other such names create a misapprehension that a (specific) object other than the Tattva (is the cause). But, by the canon of interpretation

known as the resultant import of all the branches of the Veda, all the words, whether generic or specific, connote, O Lord of Hastigiri, in one voice, Thee in the form of Narāyaṇa (as the cause) since Thou hast in Thee all the characteristics denoted by those terms.

On the authority of the Upanishads it is accepted by all that for the attainment of the highest goal, viz. mokṣa, one should meditate upon the Supreme Tattva (Para Tattva). Para Tattva is that which is the origin of the Universe; and that is Brahman. A knowledge of the Brahman can be had only from those sections of the Upanishads which deal with the creation of the Universe and which are therefore known as Kāraṇa-vākyas. All Upanishads, in one voice, declare that at first before the creation of the world there was only one object which was the origin of everything. But that cause is mentioned by different names in different Upanishads which appear to be conflicting. Some mention the cause by generic terms like Sat, Brahma, and Ātmā. The *Cāndogya Upanishad* says: "At the beginning this world existed as Sat alone, one, without a second." *Aitareya Upanishad* states: "Ātmā alone existed." *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* declares: "Brahman alone existed." Other Upanishads mention the cause by specific names as follows: "One should meditate on Īśāna"; "Only Śambhu is fit to be meditated upon"; "Neither sat, nor asat existed; Śiva alone existed." When we come across such passages, naturally the doubt arises if the origin of the Universe is one substance or many. There cannot be many causes as the ultimate cause, which is supreme, must be only one. If so what is that cause? And how to explain and reconcile the several passages which mention other things as the cause?

We shall first take up the passages that refer to the cause of the world (Jagat-kāraṇa) by generic terms and examine them. One kāraṇa-vākya was—"There was Sat in the beginning." 'Sat' means 'existent' and it is an extremely comprehensive word. It reveals that the cause of the world is an object which has existence and is not a non-existent entity—Śūnya. But it does not clearly say whether the cause that is existent is big or small. The Śruti-vākya—"Brahman alone existed"—clarifies the doubt. It says the cause is big. For the word Brahman means 'big'. There is still another doubt whether the cause, existent and big, is sentient or



non-sentient. Then comes the Mantra: "Ātmā alone existed" which rules out the non-sentient object from being the cause. The word 'Ātmā' means a sentient being. From all this we come to the conclusion that the Cause of the Universe (Jagat-kāraṇa) is Existent, Big and Sentient—Sat, Brahman and Ātmā—a Tattva which is big and which wills and evolves itself into the objects of the world. The word 'Ātmā' is again a generic term which can denote a Jīvātmā (the individual self) and Paramātmā (the Supreme Self). It does not specify any particular deity as the Jagat-kāraṇa. On the other hand there are passages in the Upanishads which refer to the cause by specific names such as 'Śambhu', 'Śiva', 'Īśāna' and 'Nārāyaṇa'. The words Śambhu and Śiva denote by convention Rudra, and Nārāyaṇa denotes the Lord of Śrī. Rudra and Nārāyaṇa are not identical and so the question remains as to which of the two is the Jagatkāraṇa and therefore Para Tattva. Here the Mīmāṃsā Śāstra comes to our help. It states that when there is such a conflict between passages in the Veda, they must be reconciled by proper interpretation. The principle of interpretation enunciated by the Mīmāṃsā Śāstra is as follows; When, in a context, a number of words of which the earlier ones are generic and the latter specific, are employed to denote a thing, the generic words must be taken to refer only to the thing denoted by words which are specific, and among the latter the less specific refer to that denoted by the more specific word. In the present context Sat, Brahmā and Ātmā are such generic words and they must be taken to refer to Nārāyaṇa as the cause since He is eternally existent, He is the greatest of all, and He alone pervades all the objects of the worlds. Though Śambhu, Śiva and Īśāna also are specific names, the conventional meaning of these words as Rudra does not fit in with the context. So they have to be so interpreted as to denote Nārāyaṇa. This is done by giving the etymological meanings of those words, which then are taken as common nouns (and not proper names). 'Īśāna' means 'ruler' and that can very well denote Nārāyaṇa who is the Supreme Ruler of the Universe—patim viśvasya, as the Śruti says. 'Śambhu' means the 'bestower of happiness' and that also signifies Nārāyaṇa the Supreme Deity, who alone confers the highest Bliss (Mokṣa). The word 'Śiva' means 'auspicious'. As Nārāyaṇa has qualities of unsurpassed auspiciousness, the word Śiva also may with propriety refer to Him. The *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma* also states that Śiva, Śambhu and Sthāṇu are the names of Viṣṇu..

It may be asked if the word Nārāyaṇa also cannot be given an etymological meaning and then made to denote some deity other than the Lord of Śrī. The Vyākaraṇa Śāstra (Sanskrit Grammar) declares in unequivocal terms that the word 'Nārāyaṇa' is a proper name and it can be employed to denote only one God. viz.: The Lord of Śrī; and the principle of etymological interpretation cannot be applied to the word Nārāyaṇa. If an etymological interpretation is desired to be given, the form of the word will not be Nārāyaṇa, but will be Nārāyaṇa which is not the case. So the word Nārāyaṇa is a proper name and denotes only Viṣṇu, the Lord of Śrī. Thus even the specific words like Śambhu and Śiva in the Kāraṇa-vākyas have to be taken as generic words and given etymological meanings so as to connote Nārāyaṇa, the Para Tattva.

#### 14. Īśvara Tattva—Śrīman Nārāyaṇa

It was stated that the Upanishads reveal that Nārāyaṇa is the origin of the Universe and is therefore the Para-Tattva—the Supreme Reality. The generic terms like 'Sat', 'Brahmā' and 'Ātmā', as well as the specific names like 'Īśāna', 'Śambhu' and 'Śiva' mentioned in the kāraṇa-vākyas of the Upanishads connote only Nārāyaṇa as possessing the respective qualities denoted by them. The conclusion was based on the rule of interpretation enunciated by the Mīmāṃsā Śāstra and the rule of nomenclature propounded by the Vyākaraṇa Śāstra.

Now we shall proceed to adduce the Nārāyaṇa Anuvāka of the Taittirīya Upanishad in support of the conclusion we have arrived at. The mantras of Nārāyaṇa Anuvāka explicitly state that Nārāyaṇa is the ultimate cause of the world, the Supreme Soul of all, and the Para Tattva.

*Sahasra-śīrṣam devaṁ viśvākṣam viśva-śambhuvaṁ,  
Viśvam nārāyaṇam devaṁ akṣaram paramam prabhuṁ.  
Viśvataḥ paramam nityam viśvam nārāyaṇam harim,  
Viśvam evedam puruṣaḥ tad-viśvam upajīvati,  
Patim viśvasya ātmeśvaram śāsvatam śivam acyutam.  
Nārāyaṇam mahā-jñeyam viśvātmānam parāyaṇam,  
Nārāyaṇa param brahma tattvam nārāyaṇaḥ paraḥ.  
Nārāyaṇa paro jyotiḥ ātmā nārāyaṇaḥ paraḥ.*

*Yacca kiñcit jagat yasmin drśyate śrūyate 'pi vā.*

*Antar-bahiṣca tat sarvaṁ vyāpya nārāyaṇaḥ sthitāḥ.*

*Anantam avyayam Kavim samudre'ntam viśva-śambhuvam.*

*Sa brahma sa śivas-sendrah so'kṣarah paramaḥ svarāt.*

—Nārāyaṇa, Anuvāka.

Thus begins the *Nārāyaṇa Anuvāka*: “He is the thousand-headed God; He sees all things; and He is the source of the welfare of all Universe. Nārāyaṇa is the world; He is the unchanging master. The Puruṣa is the Universe, because it depends on Him for its existence. He is the Master of the Universe over Whom there is no master. He is eternal and auspicious. He is the supreme object to be known. He is the soul of the world; and He is the supreme goal. Nārāyaṇa is the Para Brahman; Nārāyaṇa is Para Tattva. Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Light; Nārāyaṇa is the Paramātmā. In short, whatever is seen and whatever is heard in this world, all that, Nārāyaṇa pervades inside and out. He is the infinite and changeless seer who resides in the Ocean. He confers benefits on the world.” And with these words the Anuvāka ends: “He is Brahmā, He is Śiva, He is Indra, He is the freed soul; He is the supreme ruler with absolute sway.”

After a careful study of the context in which *Nārāyaṇa Anuvāka* occurs, all have come to the conclusion that it is solely intended to determine the nature of the Para Tattva and it does not prescribe anything here. It can be seen that Nārāyaṇa is equated here with all the different words used in the *kāraṇa-vākyas* to describe the ultimate cause of the Universe. Para Brahma, Para Tattva, Paramjyotiḥ, Paramātmā are the words used here. That shows that whatever be the term in the *kāraṇa-vākyas* that denotes the cause, all those refer only to Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇa is the Ātmā of all objects in the world and confers benefits on all. The statement in the Anuvāka that He is Brahmā, Śiva and Indra should not be taken to mean that all are one, but it means that Nārāyaṇa is the Ātmā that supports and controls Brahmā, Śiva and Indra who are only His śarīra (body). That this is the meaning can be understood from the earlier mantra which states that the Universe is Nārāyaṇa. Nobody will ever say that the non-sentient universe is identical with Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Sentient being.

Thus an impartial and all-comprehensive study of the Upaniṣhads leads us to the unavoidable conclusion that Nārāyaṇa is the Īśvara or the Supreme Deity (Para Devatā); He alone is the ultimate cause which has to be meditated upon for the attainment of Mokṣa. Therefore there is no mutual contradiction in the Vedic passages and all of them agree in referring to only one deity as the Jagatkāraṇa. That deity is Nārāyaṇa.

The truth of this conclusion is substantiated with arguments and illustrations by Itihāsaṣ like Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, and Purāṇas like Viṣṇupurāṇa and Viṣṇu Dharma. The purpose of all these is said to be the expounding of the teachings of the Upaniṣhads. They first lay down that Mokṣa is possible of attainment without delay to no one but the exclusive devotee of the Supreme Deity. To become a devotee of that deity one must know which particular god is that Supreme Deity. Though there are several gods in the divine hierarchy, only three stand in the first rank, Brahmā Viṣṇu and Śiva, who are known as the Trinity. One must decide which among the Three is supreme. A study of the Itihāsas and Purāṇas reveals that Brahmā and Rudra are created beings like other gods and men, and they are also subject to the law of Karma which is not the case with Nārāyaṇa, who, therefore, is the Para Devatā. Varāha Purāṇa states:

*Para nārāyaṇo devaḥ tasmāt jātaschaturmukhaḥ,  
Tasmāt rudro' bhavat devi.....*

(90-3)

"Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Deity; from Him was born Brahmā, the four-faced; and from Brahmā arose Rudra." Another Purāṇa, Viṣṇu Dharma, by name declares:

*Ābrahmastambaparyantāḥ jagadantar-vyavasthitāḥ,  
Prāṇinaḥ karma-janīta-saṁsāra-vaśa-vartināḥ.*

(104-23)

"From Brahmā to the blade of grass—from the highest among the gods to the lowest among the plants—all beings that have their existence in this world have had their births as a result of karma and are subject to the cycle of births and deaths."

*Hiraṇyagarbho bhagavān vāsavo'stha prajāpatiḥ,  
Asūddhās te samastās tu devādyāḥ karmayonayah.*

—(Viṣṇu Purāṇa 6-7-56-57)

“Brahmā, Indra and other gods are impure as their births are due to karma.”

*Nityam hi nāsti jagati bhūtam sthāvara jaṅgamam,  
Rte tamekam puruṣam vāsudevam sanātanam.*

—*Bhārata-Santiparva—347-32*

“There is no being in the world that is eternal either among those that move or among those that do not move, except that one Primeval Puruṣa called Vāsudeva”—(Mahābhārata). That Brahmā and Rudra attained their high status because of having worshipped the Lord of all with special rites is stated by Mahābhārata:

*Yugakoṭi-sahasrāṇi viṣṇum ārādhya padmabhūḥ,  
Punas-trailokya-dhātṛtvam prāptavān iti śuśrūma.*

—*Bhārata-Kundadharopākhyānam*

“Brahmā, the Lotus-born, worshipped Viṣṇu for thousands of crores of Yugas and obtained again the position of the creator of worlds.”

*Mahādevas-sarvamedhe mahātmā  
hutvā ātmānam devadevo babhūva.*

—(Bhārata-Śāntiparva 20-21)

“Mahādeva offered himself as an oblation in the sacrifice known as Sarvamedha and became the god of gods.” The glance of these deities on a person at the time of birth has different effects.

*Jāyamānam hi puruṣam yam pasyen madhusūdanaḥ,  
Sāttvikas-sa tu vijñeyah sa vai mokṣārtha-cintakah.  
Paśyatyenam jāyamānam brahmā rudro 'thavā punaḥ,  
Rajasā tamasā cāsyā mānasam samabhiplutam.*

—(Bhārata-Śāntiparva 358-73,77)

“He, who is looked at by Madhusūdana just as he is being born, should be considered as a Sāttvika (pure soul) and he will ever think of the goal of Mokṣa. If, on the other hand, a person is looked at immediately at birth by Brahmā or Rudra, his mind will be overcome by Rajas and Tamas (passion and ignorance).” If Nārāyaṇa, whose will is irresistible, decides that some one deserves punishment, no other god can save him and similarly no god can harm him whom Nārāyaṇa has taken under His protection.

The Purāṇas state further that Brahmā, Rudra and other gods are under the sway of the Māyā of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa and their knowledge is not perfect, but subject to contraction and expansion. All of them exist solely for the fulfilment of the purpose of Nārāyaṇa and He is their śeṣi. They are His modes who has them as His body. They render service to Nārāyaṇa who is their Inner Self. They are not objects of spiritual meditation for those who aspire for release from the bondage of Saṁsāra. These gods, if propitiated, can give only limited fruit, and that, too, they do under His direction. They cannot give Mokṣa even after a long time, whereas Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of all, bestows not only Mokṣa, but even other fruits like wealth.

For all these reasons set forth in the various Purāṇas and Itihāsas of undisputed authority, Nārāyaṇa, the Consort of Śrī is the Para Devatā and He alone should be meditated upon by those that are desirous of release (Mumukṣus).

This conclusion has the support of the Ālvārs also, who are not mere human beings, but who are the incarnations of Nitya-sūris or Ever-free Souls. They are blessed with perfect knowledge and divine vision and are the chosen devotees of the Lord. They speak in clear terms that Nārāyaṇa is the Para devatā and all others depend upon Him for their existence and power. The Ālvārs sing in their hymns:

"The gods are only the food eaten (during Pralaya or deluge) by Bhagavān, and vomited after creation. Are there any gods that are not of the nature of this vomit?"

—(Peria Tirumozhi 11-6-2.)

"Viṣṇu is the original bulb of lotus of the Navel from which arose Brahmā, Śiva and others who worship Him with reverence." Gods themselves accept Him as Supreme and praise Him.

—(Tiruvoymozhi 10-10-3.)

"All the gods meditate with earnestness and sincerity on this lotus-like feet and go about praising Him."

—(Tiruvoymozhi 3-6-4.)

About the ability-or rather the inability-of these gods to confer Mokṣa, the Ālvārs say:

“Neither Śiva, the bull-bannered, nor Brahmā, nor Indra, nor any other god knows the remedy for the disease called birth i.e., *saṁsāra*”.

—(*Periyālvār Tirumozhi 5-3-6.*)

Their conclusion, therefore, is that Śrīman-Nārāyaṇa alone can bestow Mokṣa.

While speaking of the Para Devatā, special mention must be made of one point which is hinted at by the Vedas, which is expounded by the Purāṇas and Itihāsas and which has been expatiated upon by the Ālvars. Bhagavān must always be meditated upon as being the Lord of Lakṣmī, both in the state of upāya and upeya (means and goal). In short, Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa—the Divine Couple, (Divya Dampati)—are the Para Tattva, the Supreme Reality; They are our refuge; and They again are the goal in which state we enjoy and render service to Them.

To sum up: Tattvas are three in number—Cetana, Acetana and Īśvara. Cetana or the sentient being is of three kinds: Baddha (the bound soul), Mukta (the freed soul) and Nitya (the Ever-free soul). Acetana also is of three kinds: Prakṛti (Primordial Matter made up of the three guṇas—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas); Kāla (time); and Śuddha Sattva (Matter of Eternal Splendour). Īśvara is Śrīman Nārāyaṇa who is the Ātmā of all the cetana and acetana which are His body. Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa together are our refuge and goal.

Before conclusion we can do no better than quoting a śloka of Śrī Vedānta Deśika in full with which we began and which will be a good resume.

*Ātmaikyam devataikyam trikasamadhigatā  
tulyataikyam trayāṇām  
Anyatraiśvaryam ityādyanipuṇaphanitīrādriyante  
na santah;  
Trayyantair-ekakaṇṭhaiḥ tadanugūṇa-  
manu vyāsa-mukhyoktibhiśca  
Śrīmān nārāyaṇo naḥ patiḥ akhilatanuḥ  
muktido muktabhogyah.*

—*Paradevatā Pīṭhamārthyādhikāra.*

(Those who are not proficient in the Śāstras say—that there is only a single self; that all deities (like Indra, Agni and so on) are

only one; that the three deities (Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva), are alike and of equal rank; that these three deities are only one deity (in three forms); and that the Supreme Deity is someone other than these three; and they hold other such (erroneous) views; But those, who have discrimination entertain no regard for these (divergent views). The Upanishads, with one voice, and also Manu, Vyāsa and other following the Upanishads, proclaim that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is our lord Who has all (things and beings) as His body, that He alone can give Mukti, and that He is the object of blissful enjoyment for those who have attained Mokṣa.)



## II. HITA OR THE MEANS

### Introduction

The first section was devoted to the treatment of the Tattvas or realities, which, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, are three—Cetana, Acetana and Īśvara. Cetana is the sentient being who knows, wills, acts and enjoys. The cetanas are of three kinds: 1. Baddha or the Souls in bondage, 2. Mukta or the Freed Souls, and 3. Nityas or the Ever-Free Souls. Acetana is non-sentient substance. This also is of three kinds: 1. Prakṛti or the Primordial Matter which is the material cause of the Universe; 2. Kāla or Time which is an auxiliary cause in the acts of creation and destruction; and Śuddha Sattva or Transcendent Matter of Eternal Splendour which is self-luminous and blissful by nature. The third Tattva is Īśvara. Īśvara is the Lord who pervades and controls the Universe and all the sentient beings and non-sentient things. He is their Ātmā and they are His body. He is Śrīman Nārāyaṇa and it is He that is referred to by various names like Sat, Brahman and Ātmā in different Upanishads.

The knowledge of the Tattvas must be acquired by a man from the Āchāryas. Such knowledge will help him, if he is wise, to realize the deplorable state of his existence, and induce him to adopt the means for his improvement and redemption. The means is known as Hita or Upāya in philosophical literature. And this topic is dealt with now in the Second section.

### 15. Mumukṣu Seeker after Release

*Kālāvartān prakṛti-vikṛtiḥ kāma-bhogeshu doṣān  
Jvalāgarta-pratima-duritodarka-duḥkhānubhūtim,  
Yāthātathyam sva-para-niyatam yacca divyam padam tat  
Kārākalpam vapur-api vidan kas-titikṣeta bandham.*

[Who indeed is there that will bear the bondage of Saṁsāra—who that has understood the revolutions of Time, the nature of Prakṛti, and its evolutes or modifications, the evils attendant on the enjoyment of the pleasures of this world and the Svarga, the experience of sufferings resulting from sins which resemble a pit of

fire, the true relationship that exists necessarily between himself and the Supreme Being, the region of Divine Bliss, and also the nature of the body which is like a prison—house?]

By the instruction of the Ācāryas, a person may know the distinction between the Para-tattva and Apra-tattva, the Higher and the Lower Realities. He may come to the conclusion that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is the God who alone can save him and none else including himself can be his saviour. He may also know that the Jīvātmā is essentially free and eternal, and that it lives, moves and has its being in the Paramātmā, who is its Ātmā. But he finds that somehow the Jīvātmā has identified itself with Prakṛti. Though it is a mode or Prakāra of Brahman, it imagines itself to be the mode of Prakṛti. It is like the prince who, forgetting his royal descent, lives as a hunter with other hunters in the woods and is providentially restored to his father's kingdom. Similarly the man has to adopt some means to redeem himself and become restored to the Paramātmā.

Before a person can adopt the means, he must have in him some qualities which are indispensable. They are: despondency due to past sufferings, non-attachment to worldly objects at the present and dread of distress in future. If he has these qualities, he is qualified to adopt the means for his redemption. Such a person is called Mumukṣu (or Seeker after Release).

When a person looks back upon his lives and begins to think of the acts of commission and omission he might have indulged in, and of the consequent cycle of births and deaths, pleasure and pain he has gone through, he is sure to be overwhelmed with a feeling of despair and despondency (Nirveda). All his adventures in various births move kaleidoscopically before his mind's eye. He forgets his divine heritage and enters into the body of every kind of living being—human, sub-human or super-human (celestial). When he takes birth, he does not lead a life of wisdom and restraint; but he goes the way of the flesh. He runs after the earthly pleasures which are fleeting and trivial, and which always end in pain.

If the Śāstras declare that a man is the servant of God, he refuses to accept it. He willingly becomes a slave of the Indriyas and thereby works his way to Hell; and there he is the slave of Yama-kiṅkaras (servants of Yama) who inflict all kinds of torture on him as a punishment for his evil acts. If he performs some

meritorious acts here like sacrifice, gift and penance (yajña, dāna and tapas), he goes to Svarga. It is true he avoids the Hell. But his pleasures in the Svarga are limited both by quality and quantity. He is used by the gods there as a beast of burden to satisfy their wants. In addition to all these drawbacks, he cannot have a permanent abode there. For the Puṇya or virtue which took him there, gets exhausted with the enjoyment of its fruit. Then he is hurled down to the earth to take birth as a man, animal and so on according to the Puṇya or Pāpa standing to his credit. Even after being born, he can redeem himself by doing virtuous acts and meditation on God; but he wastes his time and life by indulging in theft and robbery, vice and evil. He commits heinous sins that cannot be wiped out by expiation or washed away by untold sufferings even for innumerable ages.

When a person realizes the pitiable condition to which he has reduced himself by his own acts of ignorance, conceit and ill-will, he will feel sorry and repent. He will begin to entertain a feeling of disgust for himself and his actions. The casual company of the good and their conversation will help the feeling to take root. He will resolve to lead pure and virtuous life, avoid the desire for wealth and women of others and begin to control his senses. He will make up his mind to walk in the footsteps of men of virtue and devotion. There is such a change in his nature now that he himself abhors the forbidden path. He is ashamed of his own previous sinful acts and a feeling of despair and despondency creeps over him. This will be a healthy sign provided it does not turn him into a pessimist, but helps him work for his uplift.

Non-attachment or Vairāgya to worldly objects is another essential prerequisite for the seeker after Release. Vairāgya will arise when a person is able to know the defects and demerits of the objects like body and wealth, worldly happiness and celestial joy in Svarga. And what are the defects? The Vedas themselves declare that the body is made up of flesh, blood and filthy matter. Disease and old age are natural to it. Even great kings with all their power and wealth have vanished. So kingship has no attraction. The happiness of Svarga will cease to have any charm for a person if he should think of the troubles he has to undergo for acquiring it, and also while enjoying it. Again at the end of the acquired Puṇya he has to come down in an unidentified form along with smoke, cloud and rain. He passes through the stage of a plant

and its seed and enters the body of a man as his food where he is transformed into the vital fluid. From there he passes into the womb of a woman to be born as a human child. His sufferings in the womb of the mother in the course of pregnancy are innumerable—narrow space, filthy atmosphere, disaggreable objects which may come in as the food of the mother. His exit therefrom through a narrow hole is another spell of pain. Then comes the period of infancy when he has to depend on others for everything; as a boy and youth he is a victim to the vicissitudes of life; then the inevitable old age sets in when he is a prey to senility. All this is rounded off by death only to go again through the same cycle of sufferings. Such is the experience of the Jīva in the course of his wanderings between birth and death.

The state of gods in heaven, which is hankered after by men as a place of happiness, is in no way better. The Purāṇas are replete with the stories of gods who are ever in dread of the powerful Asuras and Rākṣasas and who suffer humiliation and defeat at their hands by losing their kingdom, home and even their wives at times. Brahmā, Rudra and Indra are no exception and they too have their tales of woe and sorrow. Thus perfect unalloyed happiness is not to be had in the Universe anywhere. The joy, if any, is like fetters of gold.

As contrasted with all this, Kaivalya or the happiness enjoyed by the realization of the Ātmā (Ātmānubhava) is said to be eternal and unmixed with sorrow. But when compared with the Bliss of Paramātmā this is almost nothing and so a man of discrimination will not choose Kaivalya.

Thus there is no happiness in the Universe either of the Prakṛti or of the Ātmā that can be preferred to the Supreme Bliss of Paramātmānubhava. Naturally the realization of the defects in them will induce a man to cultivate a spirit of non-attachment towards worldly objects. When he sees the merits in Paramātmā, he is drawn towards Him and seeks Him.

By the feeling of despondency (Nirveda) a man ceases to commit the acts prohibited by the Śāstras; by the feeling of non-attachment (Vairāgya) he avoids acts that will yield limited happiness. There is still the store of Karma which has been acquired by him in the course of the series of births from beginningless time. He must settle accounts with this. The fruit of the Karma may be anything—birth, death, suffering and sickness

here, torture in Hell, or fleeting pleasures in Svarga. A thought of this Karma will fill a person with dread for lives to come. When a man becomes thus overwhelmed with feelings of despondency, non-attachment and fear, he is eager to go in search of that which will offer him refuge. He becomes qualified to seek the help of God who alone can confer on Him perfect and eternal bliss i.e., Mokṣa or Salvation. Such a seeker after Release is known as Mumukṣhu. And the means the Mumukṣhu adopts to win the Grace of God is the upāya.

### 16. Karmayoga

*Upāyas-svaprapṛter-upanishad-adhīta-sa bhagavān  
Prasattiyai tasyokte prapadana-nididhyāsanagati.  
Tad-ārohaḥ pum-saḥ sukṛta-paripākena mahatā  
Nidānam tatrāpi svayam akhila-nirmāṇa-nipuṇāḥ.*

—Rahasyatrayasāra, upāyavibhāgādhikāra.

[Bhagavān is declared in the Upanishads to be Himself the means (upāya) of attaining Him. The ways of Bhakti and prapatti are prescribed for winning His grace. The adoption of these ways is the result of the great ripening of meritorious deeds (done in the past) and, even for this, Bhagavān, who has the ability to create everything, is Himself the cause].

The Śāstras declare that Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa are the four *Puruṣārthas* or ends of life. From a study of the scriptures at the feet of the Ācārya, a wise man learns that the highest end of life is neither the performance of moral duty (*dharma*), nor the acquisition of wealth and power (*artha*), nor the satisfaction of desires (*kāma*); but the realization of Brahman (*Mokṣa*) is the highest good, supreme duty and infinite bliss. When he looks back upon his previous births from beginningless time, he gets a feeling of repentance as well as disgust against himself for having foolishly wasted all his lives in the pursuit of useless things. He begins to cultivate non-attachment to the terrestrial and celestial pleasures which are insignificant and evanescent. When he thinks of the future births he may have to take as a result of his karmas, he is filled with a dread of the sufferings in store for him. A man in this state of mind is qualified to aspire for Mokṣa and he is the Mumukṣhu. He eagerly looks for

the means to attain the supreme goal. Scriptures like *Bhagavān Gītā* prescribe Bhaktiyoga and Prapattiyoga as the only two ways for the attainment of Mokṣa, the highest end of life.

The person will realize that Bhaktiyoga is too difficult for him to adopt and he must well equip himself by training and discipline before he can take to it. He must pass through the stages of Karmayoga and Jñānayoga. Karmayoga is the practice of Karmas by a man with a particular mental attitude as a result of the knowledge acquired by him in regard to the nature of the individual self and Supreme Self (or Jīvātmā and Paramātmā). What is the difference between Karma and Karmayoga? Karma is the name given to the various duties and rites prescribed by the Śāstras with reference to men according to their caste or *varṇa*, stage of life of *āśrama* and equipment or *adhikāra*. These duties are classified under three heads as *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kāmya*. Nitya karmas are the regular duties to be performed compulsorily (like the daily *sandhyā-vandana*). Naimittika-karmas are those that are to be compulsorily performed on specific occasions (like the lunar or solar eclipse). Kāmya-karmas are optional and are connected with a wish to be fulfilled (for instance, a sacrifice for the attainment of *svarga*). As the first two are compulsory, the non-performance of the same will be a transgression of law, and will be visited with punishment. The third is only optional. If a man wants a particular fruit, he adopts the means to acquire it. Otherwise he need not. Karma as voluntary action is purposive and involves the idea of end which is called *kāma* or desire. None in the world is free from Karma. The jñāni too has got to maintain his body by activity. Even gods have to do their duty in the interests of world welfare. So cessation from karma in thought, word or deed is a psychological impossibility.

On account of the age-long identification with Prakṛti, the Jiva can never escape from the wheel of Karma as long as he is in the world of Saṃsāra. When he does a deed, as the doer he is externally determined by the guṇas of Prakṛti. He is never free from the domination of the guṇas. If his mind is clear and serene, he can infer that Sattva-guṇa is predominant: if he is restless and unhappy, Rajoguṇa has the upper hand; and if he is ignorant and lazy, he may know that Tamoguṇa dominates. From all this the Karmayogi concludes that all Karmas are determined by the guṇas of Prakṛti, and not by the Ātman though he is really the doer.

In the case of Karmayoga, a person performs all the karmas i.e., rites and duties prescribed by the Śāstras as any other man does; but the difference lies in the particular mental attitude with which he performs them. First he does not think of the fruit of the action. His action is called *niṣkāma-karma* or action without the desire for the fruit thereof. He renounces the fruit, but not the Karma as such. So Karmayoga is renunciation in action, as opposed to renunciation of action as the ideal of conduct. Karmayoga again consists not in abandoning the deed, but the doer-consciousness. The kind of rites and duties may be determined by one's temperament and station in life; but the nature or inner motive of Karma is the same in all, viz., duty for duty's sake, irrespective of inclination within and utility without.

The act of a *karmayogin* may be described as being neither karma or action nor *karma-sannyāsa* or abandonment of karma. He steers clear of the fruit due to the performance of the karma and of the punishment resulting from its abandonment. He follows the middle course between the active and the contemplative life as it is more easy, natural and conducive to spirituality than Karma or *karma-sannyāsa*.

Another special feature in Karmayoga is that the Karmayogin, even while doing the act, entertains the thought that Paramātmā is the source of all acts, and that neither is he the doer nor the guṇas of Prakṛti that determine his acts. For he knows that Paramātmā is the Ātmā of all things in the world and He alone controls and directs everything—the guṇas, their substrate Prakṛti and Jīva in both the embodied as well as the disembodied states.

Karmayoga is of different kinds, and one can choose any of them according to one's taste or inclination. The following are some of its varieties taught by *Bhagavad Gītā*: the adoration of gods or *Devārcanā*, the performance of austerities or *tapas*, pilgrimage to sacred places or *tīrthayātrā*, giving in charity or *dāna*, sacrifices or *yajña*, control of the mind and the senses or *indriya-nigraha*, the chanting of the Vedas or *svādhyāya*, and the study of the meaning of the Vedic passages or *jñāna-yajña*. One can see that these are the same as the karmas that men normally do in their daily life. As they are prescribed as a part of Karmayoga, it will be easy for men to adopt them and succeed in their efforts.

Karmayoga is not the performance of mere Karma, for there is some knowledge involved in it. The karmayogi has the knowledge of the true nature of the Ātmā that when he does an act, he is not really the actor, but his actions are conditioned by the three guṇas of Prakṛti. His knowledge is further enriched by the thought about Paramātmā that ultimately it is the Paramātmā that acts.

Karmayoga has an additional merit of yielding both the jñānayoga and its fruit. Normally a person practises Karmayoga and gets self-purification. It gives him the competence or *adhikāra* for the performance of jñānayoga, which is the direct means for the attainment of self-realization or *Ātmāvalokana*. It is also stated that the continuous performance of Karmayoga will confer self-realization itself on a person without his going through the stage of *jñānayoga*.

Men of great learning and ability, who guide others and whose actions are likely to be imitated by others, must practise only Karmayoga and not Jñānayoga, even though they may have the capacity to adopt the latter. For ordinary men doing Karma will feel happy and secure that they are going in the foot-steps of great men who practise Karmayoga. They will be content to practise Karmayoga in which they will succeed, instead of taking to Jñānayoga which will be beyond them and they will not meet with failure. We come to know from the Purāṇas that great Yogis like Janaka practised only Karmayoga, and attained self-realization through it.

Karmayoga is superior to jñānayoga for the following reasons : Karmayoga is easy to perform as it is in a line with the daily practice of the Karmas; there are not chances of failure in its performance; it gives the competence or *adhikāra* for performing Jñānayoga to those who wish to adopt it; and it also confers straightaway self-realization or *Ātmāvalokana* without going through the process of Jñānayoga. Therefore it is that Lord Kṛṣṇa, Gītachārya, recommends to Arjuna, Karmayoga in preference to Jñānayoga.

### 17. Jñānayoga

It was stated that the practice of Karma without commercial views and without the egoistic feeling of Ahaṁkāra is Karmayoga.



The Karmayogi conquers his mind and acts with a knowledge of the essential nature of his Self or Ātman that it is distinct from his body, senses and the like. He also knows that his Ātmā is supported and controlled by Īśvara and serves His purposes, and therefore it is the body or śarīra of Īśvara. When Karma in Karmayoga is performed without an eye on the fruit, and when it is illumined by Jñāna or the metaphysical knowledge of Ātma, Karmayoga is as effective as jñānayoga and leads direct to Self-realization or Ātmāvalokana without going through the path of Jñānayoga.

Jñānayoga is the constant and uninterrupted contemplation of the svarūpa or essential nature of the Ātmān. It is the direct means to Self-realization. This is a very difficult process which ordinary men cannot practise. It can be achieved only by a rigorous, moral and spiritual discipline. When a man successfully practises Karmayoga, he acquires the competence to perform Jñānayoga, and then only he can begin Jñānayoga.

The first requisite in this Yogic process is (Samadarśana) or a particular kind of mental state when the Yogin is able to maintain equanimity towards all things. He must so train his mind that it is neither elated by success, nor depressed by failure. This is achieved by the cultivation of a spirit of non-attachment to worldly things, which will come automatically when he realizes the innate defects in them. When he gives up the desire for things, there is no longer cause for anger. When the mind has thus been trained to be free from desires, it can be easily directed towards the Ātman. As the essential nature of Ātman is bliss, it is a source of joy which is superior to all worldly pleasures. The Yogi is well-disposed towards all beings and is always interested in doing what is good to them, because his mind is free from rivalry, jealousy and anger. His mind is not perturbed by anything—friend or foe, dust or diamond.

When a Yogi has developed this state of mind, he can begin the performance of Jñānayoga. As he rises higher and higher in the practice of Jñānayoga, he passes through four stages. In the first stage he sees that the Ātmās of all beings are similar, be they gods or dogs. All the Ātmās are blissful and sentient, by nature. The difference lies only in the bodies that they have taken as a result of their karmas. In the next stage, he sees a similarity

between Īśvara and the Ātmās, when the latter have been purged of all Puṇya and Pāpa, and remain in their natural stage. About this Yogi, it is said he sees God in all Jīvas and all Jīvas in God. In the third stage he sees that all the Ātmās are equal to Īśvara in the possession of infinite knowledge consequent on the annihilation of their Karma. The Yogi is so advanced that he is able to do it even when he is not practising introversion. In the last stage, which is the highest, the Yogi is able to command such supreme equanimity that he is not affected by anything that comes to him—good or bad, welcome or unwelcome. For he knows that they have nothing to do with the Ātmā; their relationship stops with the body from which the Ātmā is different. The Jñāni exhibits universal sympathy in which he realizes the kinship of all Jīvas, and regards the joys and sorrows of others as his own.

When the Yogin has reached this stage by his moral endeavour and spiritual discipline, he becomes *Sthitaprajña* or steadfast in knowledge, and he is on the road to Self-realization. There are four stages in the evolution of this yoga from moral outlook to spiritual insight. In the first stage known as *yatamāna* the Yogi, like the tortoise that draws in its out-going limbs, tries to withdraw his Indriyas going out towards the objects, and fix the mind on the Ātman. Eventhough the Indriyas have been controlled with effort, the mind, which has been tainted for long with love and hatred, will not be able to stick to the Ātmā. It will begin to stray again and again, with the Indriyas following it, in spite of repeated efforts to arrest its out-going tendency. The Yogi must try to keep under control the mind by training. He must cultivate a spirit of indifference towards worldly objects so that he may feel neither elated by joy nor depressed by sorrow. This is the second stage called the *Vyatireka*.

The third stage is called *Ekendriya*, in which the mind is made Self-centred and steady. The nature of the blissful Ātman is presented to the mind so that the latent impressions of joy and sorrow do not wean it away. *Vasikara* is the name of the last and the highest stage when even those latent impressions have been completely annihilated and the mind is not attracted by anything other than the Ātmā. It is in this stage that the Yogi attains the supreme goal of Self-realization or Ātmāvalokana.

Self-realization can be attained only if the mind and the senses are under perfect control; and the senses can be controlled only if the Self is realized. As they are thus interdependent, the attainment of Self-realization is almost impossible if one relies on one's own efforts. Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches in the *Bhagavad Gītā* the way of getting over this difficulty. The Yogi must withdraw the indriyas from sense-objects. Instead of trying to fix them on the Ātmā which is of a very subtle nature, he is advised to think of the divine, lovely and auspicious form (divya-maṅgala-vigraha) of God. The Lord is pleased by the endeavour of the Yogin to think of Him and makes his mind pure by dispelling his sins. The pure-minded Yogi is able to control the senses and get over the temptations of worldly objects. Meditation on the Ātmā is no more difficult for him. He fixes the mind on the Ātmā and practises the Jñānayoga till he is able to attain Selfrealization or Ātmāvalokana.

Thus by the assiduous performance first of Karmayoga and then of Jñānayoga or by the continuous practice of Karmayoga alone (without switching over to Jñānayoga), a person succeeds in attaining to a vision of His Ātman or the Self. This Selfrealization is known as Kaivalya and he who attains it is called a Kevala. It is the goal of a Kevala to intuit his self by abandoning the false and fleeting ideas of Ahamkāra and Mamakāra, to regain his essential and eternal nature, and to attain freedom from birth and death, and the ills of Saṁsāra.

The Ātmā is so blissful by nature that a vision of it will create a distaste for all other sense pleasures and will draw him towards itself. The Kaivalyānubhava is so superior to all other pleasures that there is the danger of a man becoming for ever attached to it, of his becoming disinclined to look beyond and of postponing the day of the attainment of perfect joy or Mokṣa. If he escapes the snare of enjoying this pleasing vision of the Ātman and does not get immersed in it, he can begin the practice of the Bhaktiyoga which is the direct means for the attainment of the highest goal, namely enjoying Bhagavān Himself. But the Kevala prefers the joy of Kaivalya to the bliss of divine life. To him seeking God is only a means to seeing his self.

Some philosophers are of the opinion that the joy of Kaivalya is eternal, as it proceeds from the realization of the Ātmā which is

eternal. They also say that the place of the Kevala is somewhere in the outskirts of Paramapada where he enjoys his Ātman eternally, and does not rise further to enjoy divine communion with Paramātmā. Sri Vedānta Deśika declares, on the authority of the Śāstras, that Kaivalya is not the eternal enjoyment of the Ātman, but it is on the road to Mukti. His argument is : if there is complete annihilation of Karma, the Ātman will attain a state natural to it; that is, it will have the Supreme Bliss of the enjoyment of Paramātmā. As against this, if it is said he stops with the enjoyment of Kaivalya, it means that there is some hindrance to the attainment of the Supreme goal which is his by hereditary right, and which he has not been enjoying for long for some reasons. As the Karma which causes the hindrance is only adventitious and not natural to the Ātman, that must some day end when the Ātman will attain to its natural state. That means the Kaivalya also will end some time when the Ātman will go to enjoy the Paramātmā. So the Kevala, who enjoys the Kaivalya, is on the path to perfection, and will eventually reach the Supreme goal. The path of devotion leads to God.

The instinct which the Kevala has for the Infinite soon asserts itself and urges him to shed his sinfulness arising from self-satisfaction and self-alienation. Then the Kevala is transformed into a jñāni. He hungers for God and tries to attain the bliss of immortal communion with Him by the means known as Bhakti-yoga.

### 18. *Bhaktiyoga*

A mumukṣu or seeker after release has to practise Karmayoga as the first step on the way to God—realization. In that stage he regularly performs all the rites and duties prescribed for him by the Śāstras, but with no attachment either to the act or its fruit. The Karmayoga takes him to the next step, viz., Jñānayoga, which is the constant and un-interrupted contemplation of the Svarūpa or essential nature of the Ātmā. Jñānayoga is the means for ātmāvalokana or Self-realization. In the case of some persons the continued performance of the Karmayoga itself yields the self-realization without going through the stage of Jñānayoga. The mumukṣu has no attraction for the enjoyment of sense-objects or of the self (Aīśvarya or Kaivalya). But the realization of the self is

useful to him as it enables him to reach the Paramātmā, the Indwelling Self, even as the sight of a casket containing a gem is necessary for the sight of the gem in it. Thus the ātmāvalokana or the Self-realization serves as a qualification for beginning the practice of the Bhaktiyoga.

**Bhaktiyoga** is the meditation with unsurpassed love on the essential nature, qualities and form of Bhagavān. Who is not dependent on any one else, Who is not subject to the authority of any one else and Who does not exist for the fulfilment of the purposes of any one else. This meditation is preceded by Bhakti or love of God which springs from the study of the scriptures and the company of the godly, and which generates an eager desire to know God with perfect clearness. Bhakti is a continuous stream of knowledge which is of the nature of uninterrupted memory and which is unbroken like a stream of oil. The meditation on God has got to be done everyday throughout the life—not only in one life, but even during several lives to come till the goal is attained. As the meditation becomes more and more intense, Bhakti also grows from strength to strength, until at last it is of the same form as direct perception, and is no longer of the nature of a stream of remembrances. Even at the last moment when the **tmumuksu** sheds his final body and departs to attain his home in the Paramātmā he has to think of God. This final remembrance, which goes by the name of antima-pratyaya, is an auxiliary to Bhaktiyoga and the latter will be incomplete without it.

The daily performance of the rites and duties according to one's varṇa (caste) or āśrama (stage of life) is also an aṅga or auxiliary to Bhaktiyoga. If one fails to practise them, it gives rise to sins which help the Rajoguṇa and Tamoguṇa in man become predominant and which thereby impede the growth of knowledge so necessary for Bhakti. The performance of daily rites has therefore a double purpose to serve in the case of the Yogi. It helps the growth of the Bhakti-yoga and it keeps away the sins which are an obstacle.

**Bhaktiyoga** is the only means by which Mokṣa can be attained. It can be practised for the attainment of other ends also like lordship here or in Svarga, or of self-realization, according to the inclination of the person who takes to it. This does not mean that the man is tempted to give up the path of God-realization and

run after worldly pleasures. The promise of other ends is only to strengthen the faith of the weak-minded and convince them that Bhaktiyoga is as sure a means of God-realization as it is to the other ends of life viz., Aiśvarya and Kaivalya. The wise and the discriminating man will choose out of the four ends of life only the highest viz., Mokṣa as the goal for him.

As already stated, the continuous practice of Karmayoga alone in the case of some, or the practice of Jñānayoga which follows it in the case of others, leads to Self-realization which is a prerequisite for beginning the Bhaktiyoga. This stage is reached only when one has gone through the eight stages of Yoga which are usually known as Aṣṭāṅgayoga. The eight stages are Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi. Of these the first four are external aids and the second four seek to turn the mind inward and are therefore more important. Yama is the practice of virtues like non-injury to living beings, non-covetousness, non-acceptance of gifts etc. Niyama is the practice of purity in thought, word and deed, contentment, study of scriptures and the like. Āsana is the posture assumed by a person which is conducive to the practice of concentration of mind: A stiff posture will cause strain to the body which will disturb the concentration, and a reclining posture will lead to drowsiness or sleep and thus stop concentration. The next step is Prāṇāyāma or the control of breath along with meditation on the meaning of a Mantra like Aṣṭākṣara. Pratyāhāra is the withdrawal of the mind and other senses from their out-going tendency. Dhāraṇā is the fixing of the mind on the object of devotion viz. Bhagavān. Dhyāna is the continuous meditation on the same form of Bhagavān to the exclusion of all other objects. Samādhi is the final stage of concentration when the Yogi attains the super-conscious state of divine life and becomes united with God. There is unity, but not identity. This attainment of unity is only for the nonce as happens when the Yogi is in the state of yoga. With the cessation of the yoga, this vision of unity also comes to an end. Eternal union is possible only in Mukti which is the goal of the Bhakta.

Śrī Rāmānuja in his *Śrī Bhāṣya* states on the authority of Vṛttikāra that there are seven moral and spiritual prerequisites to Bhaktiyoga known as Sādhana-Saptaka. They are Viveka, Vimo-

ka, Abhyāsa, Kriyā, Kalyāṇa, Anavasāda and Anuddharṣa. Viveka or discrimination is the purification of the body by means of food that is Sāttvik and pure. Bodily purity is necessary for the purity of mind which is helpful to spiritual concentration. Vimoka or freedom is the abjuration of all other desires so that the mind can steadily think of God. Abhyāsa is the practice of the worship of God, the Home of all goodness, again and again. Kriyā or Work is the performance of the fivefold duties known as *Pañca Mahāyajñas*—offerings to gods, ancestors, sages, human beings and sub-human species. Kalyāṇa or auspiciousness is the practice of the virtue of truthfulness, integrity, compassion, benevolence and harmlessness. The next *sādhana* is anavasāda. Anavasāda is despair due to disappointment, remembrance of past sorrows and horrible imaginings. Its opposite is Anavasāda. Anuddharṣa is the absence of exaltation, the golden mean between excessive joy and the absence of it.

When one has acquired the seven prerequisites one can confidently begin the practice of *Bhaktiyoga*, which is the means, direct and immediate, of God-realization. This *Bhaktiyoga* is the same as *Para-bhakti*. God can be realized only by absolute devotion and not by mere Vedic study, meritorious work or austerity. The *Yogi* or *Bhakta* in the *Para-bhakti* stage lives for God and in God. Communion with God is Bliss to him and separation from Him is sorrow. His mind, thought and sense organs, all are God-centred. Meditation on God, Praise of God and Worship of God are the only things that sustain him. Every act of his is surcharged with love of God, be it the routine act of daily life or the obligatory practice of *Bhaktiyoga*. Even as the *Bhakta* seeks God, God also seeks the *Bhakta*. The god-hunger of the *Bhakta* can be matched only by the soul-hunger of God. *Bhagavān* calls him a *Mahātmā* and says that rarely does He come across such a person. *Bhakta*, according to *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, is His very soul; i.e., the Soul of God, the Over-Soul of all. Anything that the *Bhakta* offers with devotion, be it a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, the Lord accepts, with great eagerness and pleasure. Such a *Bhakta* is known in *Śrī Vaiṣṇavism* as a *Paramaikāntī*. The two qualities that are characteristic of the *Paramaikāntī* are *Pāratantya* or absolute dependence on God and *Pārārthya* or unreserved existence for God. The *Paramaikāntī* knows, feels and acts with the conviction that *Bhagavān* is both the means and the end—

Prāpaka and Prāpya. He resorts to no one else as the means and seeks nothing else as the goal. He lives, moves and has his being in the Lord. Every act of His is transfigured into kainkarya or worship of the Lord. If he has perfect Bhakti to the Lord here, this world itself is Mokṣa for him and he does not hanker after even Mukti or Release. To the Paramaikāntī, Bhakti here and now is even preferable to Bliss in a world beyond. That is the unique doctrine of Śrī Vaiṣaṇavism clearly given expression to by Śrī Aṇḍāl and Śrī Vedānta Deśika. Bhakti finds its expression in service to Bhagavān. Service to Bhagavān finds its fruition in service to the Bhāgavatas, the devotees of God, which is declared to be the greatest Puruṣārtha one can wish for.

By constant practice Para-bhakti develops a thirst in the Yogi for a direct vision of the Bhagavān as we see in the case of Nammālvār in *Thiruvaimozhi* or Arjuna in *Viśvarūpādhyāya*. Bhagavān out of infinite Mercy shows Himself. This is Parajñāna. This vision of God, instead of satisfying the Bhakta, whets his desire. His love becomes more intense and he more eagerly longs for union and communion with Bhagavān. This is called the stage of Paramabhakti. The Bhakta cannot brook even a moment's delay in the realization of his desires. He prays, beseeches and pleads on oath that God should come to him and grant him the joy of union. Bhagavān also who has been preparing the ground, rushes to the Bhakta. Both are united in the land of Mukti, from which there is no return for the Mukta and where it is all Bliss, unlimited and eternal. Bhaktiyoga is also known as the Brahma-vidyā or Upāsana.

### 19. *Brahmavidyās or Upāsana*

Bhakti-yoga also known as Brahma Vidyā is of several kinds. Brahma Vidyās are said to be thirtytwo in number though we come across many more in the Upaniṣads. The one feature common to all of them is that Para Brahman along with the five attributes that define It is the object of meditation. The five attributes that define Brahman and that are known as 'Svarūpa-nirūpaka-dharma' are: Being truth (Satyam), being knowledge (Jñānam), being infinite (Ananta), being blissful (Ānanda), and being pure (Amala). Besides these attributes which are common to all the Vidyās, each Brahma vidyā has its own specific



characteristic which distinguishes one from the other. Though the Vidyās are different because of their names and because of the different qualities with which the Brahman is meditated upon, the ultimate goal, viz., the attainment of Brahman is the same for all. A person is free to choose any Vidyā he likes and proceed with its practice. The procedure may be different, but all of them lead to the same end. Sadvidyā, Daharavidyā, Bhūmavidyā, Antaryāmi-vidyā, Antar-Ādityavidyā, Vaiśvānaravidyā, Aksharavidyā, Prātardanavidyā, Paryāṅkavidyā, and Nyāsavidyā, are some of the Vidyās. The special quality with which Brahman is associated with Sadvidyā, is Its being the three-fold cause of the Universe. In Daharavidyā, Brahman is meditated upon as residing in the interior of the human heart with an infinitesimal form. Brahman is being possessed of a charming body of golden hue and of eyes lovely like the full-blown lotus, is the object of meditation in the Antar-Ādityavidyā. In Bhūmavidyā, Brahman is infinite. The Aksharavidyā lays emphasis on the imperishable nature of the Infinite. Brahman as the Ātmā of Indra is spoken of in the Prātardanavidyā. The Paryāṅkavidyā visualises the transcendental Realm of Brahman and the glorious hall in which Brahman is attained. In Nyāsavidyā stress is laid upon the surrender of the Self at the feet of the Lord Who is put in the place of all difficult means. Thus every Vidyā has a peculiar quality of its own which distinguishes it from all other Vidyās.

The Upāsaka who has taken to the practice of Brahmavidyā has the great merit that he becomes free from all sins committed by him so far from time immemorial—all sins excepting the one that has begun to operate and yield its fruit (which is known as Prārabdha-karma). If after beginning the Upāsanā, he happens to commit sins unconsciously or by force of circumstances, the sins do not stick to him. If he commits sins wantonly, he is answerable for them. True he has not got to go to the dominion of Yama for experiencing the fruit of those sins. But he incurs the displeasure of God Who sets him right by inflicting a light punishment like having a disobedient son or an indifferent wife, becoming bald-headed or squint-eyed and so on. Even this light punishment can be avoided by him if he repents and performs an expiatory act like Prapatti. Thus Prapatti or Seeking refuge in God has got a place in the practice of Bhaktiyoga.

When the Upāsaka wants to begin the Bhaktiyoga, there are many sins of his that stand in his way. He will have to settle accounts with them either by experiencing the fruits of all those sins standing to his credit or by making suitable acts of expiation (Prāyaścitta) for every one of them. The sins are so many in number that all the time in the future will not be enough either for experiencing the fruits or for performing acts of expiation. Then how to get over the sins and begin the Bhaktiyoga? The Śāstras prescribe Prapatti or the Means of seeking Refuge under the Parabrahman as the sure way of getting rid of the sins.

*Anubhavitum aghaṅgham nālam āgāmi kālāḥ  
 Prasamayitum aśeṣam niṣkriyābhīr-na śakyam,  
 Svayam iti hi daye! tvam svikṛta-śrīnīvāsā  
 Śīthilita-bhavabhītiḥ śreyase jāyase naḥ.*

—Dayāśatuka-34

The Yogi falls at the feet of Paramātmā expressing his incompetency and destitution and prays to Him to destroy his sins and help him to begin the Bhakti-yoga. Bhagavān in His infinite Mercy takes the Yogi under His protection and destroys the sins. When the sins that stand in the way of beginning the Bhakti-yoga have thus been wiped out, the Yogi is able to begin the practice of Bhakti-yoga or Upāsana. If there are occasional acts of omission or commission in the actual performance of Bhakti-yoga, they also can be got rid of by Prapatti. Thus the Upāsaka has to seek the help of Prapatti for beginning the Upāsana and also for completing it successfully.

There are several restrictions that go with the practice of Bhakti-yoga and therefore difficult to practise for the following reasons: 1. Men born of the first three castes only can take to it and even among them only those who have sufficient knowledge and capacity. 2. They should have passed through the stages of Karma-yoga and Jñāna-yoga by constant practice and realized the individual soul. 3. There are innumerable obstacles in the form of sins which will prevent a person from beginning the Bhakti-yoga. In order to overcome them, he has to seek the aid of Prapatti or Śaraṇāgati at the feet of God. 4. Again in the daily practice of Bhakti-yoga there is always the risk of mistakes creeping in. If mistakes come in, either expiation prescribed in the Śāstras with reference to such sins must be done or another Prapatti performed

in place of such expiation. 5. Bhakti-Yoga has got to be supplemented by the performance of various obligatory rites, daily and occasional. 6. Bhakti-yoga is capable of yielding the fruit only after a long time. The reason for this is that it can destroy all sins excepting those that have begun to operate and yield fruit (i.e., Prārabdha karma). Before the attainment of salvation, one must experience all the fruits of the Prārabdha-karma, good or bad. One cannot say how long this period of experience will be when the operating karma will be exhausted. It may be many years and even many births. 7. Lastly even at the last moment when the yogi sheds his body, the thought of God must be in his mind which is known as Antimasmṛiti or final remembrance. Such is Bhakti-yoga.

As against all these difficulties that are in the practice of Bhakti-yoga, there is the great merit that the very process is a source of joy and happiness unlike the other means. This is because the object of meditation is Bhagavān whose essential nature is Bliss and whose qualities are auspicious and faultless. A greater merit is that when the Bhakti-yoga is successfully completed, the Upāsaka is once for all free from the travails of birth and death and attains the state of Release from which there is no return. There he experiences the long longed for union and communion with the Paramātmā who is infinite Bliss, perfect and eternal.

Once the Bhakti-yoga is completed, the Upāsaka can straight-away depart from this world and need not wait for an auspicious moment, day or month as other imperfect souls have got to do. As he emerges from the body escorted by the In-dwelling Paramātmā and soars up, he is welcomed and honoured at every stage by the gods in their respective domains. He passes through those worlds of gods and crosses the Divine River Viraja which separates the World of Matter (Prakṛti) and the World of Transcendental Splendour (Śrī Vaikuṇṭha). The Eternal Souls or Nitya-sūris welcome him as he enters the kingdom of God. Now he is a Mukta and in the company of other Muktas and Nitya-sūris he enjoys infinite Bliss in the service of God.

## 20. *Śaraṇāgati or Self-Surrender*

Seers and sages in Ancient India practised the Bhakti-yoga since they were well-equipped and therefore qualified for it in

every way. But in this age when the life of man is short and his resources meagre, few are competent to practise Bhakti-yoga. So God in His Infinite Mercy has prescribed an alternative means which goes by the name of Śaraṇāgati. The Śāstras proclaim that Śaraṇāgati is easy to perform and no one is debarred from performing it by reason of his birth, age or sex. It does not stand in need of any extra external aids and is finished in a moment. It has also the additional advantage of having the power to yield any fruit one desires and at any time one chooses at once or later.

Śaraṇāgati or the Doctrine of Self-surrender is the upāya which has been taught by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the battle-field of Kurukshetra. One can appreciate the greatness of this upāya only when one understands the particular setting in which it was taught, which we shall presently describe.

The two armies of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas have been arranged in battle-array ready to begin the fight the moment the signal is given. The conches are blown and drums sounded to rouse the enthusiasm of the warriors. Arjuna thinks for a moment and wants to have a view of the warring forces. So he orders Kṛṣṇa, who has undertaken to be his charioteer in the battle to drive his chariot and station it between the two forces standing in array. Kṛṣṇa does so and asks him to survey the opposing ranks. Arjuna looks round and to his eyes all of them are only loving kinsmen and respectable Ācāryas. He is overcome by mixed feelings of affection, sorrow and fear: affection for the kinsmen; sorrow that he is going to be the agent for the destruction of so many of them; and fear that he is bringing hell upon himself by killing so many for the sake of power and wealth. He is upset and confused. He throws aside the bow and arrows and falls at the feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa requesting him to advise and guide him. Kṛṣṇa smiles at the strange behaviour of the brave warrior Arjuna in the battle-field, especially before the very eyes of the enemies. Kṛṣṇa begins his teaching by saying that the sympathy and love of Arjuna for his enemies then are quite out of place and unbecoming of his valour. He advises Arjuna that it is his duty as a Kṣatriya to carry on the fight, but in a spirit of detachment and with a feeling of dedication to God. That will be, not mere karma, but Karma-yoga the practice of moral discipline. That will lead him to the Jñānayoga, which will enable him to realize his Ātmā. That will take him on to the next stage viz. Bhaktiyoga which is the means for the

attainment of Supreme Bliss. Kṛṣṇa concludes his teachings, and towards the end of the last chapter of *Bhagavad Gītā* advises him to take to Bhaktiyoga which was already taught to him in Chapter IX. Arjuna, who has a desire for the highest fruit, is stricken again with sorrow at the thought of his incompetency and the obstacles to the practice of Bhaktiyoga. Seeing the flood of sorrow in the face of Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa is moved and he immediately teaches the Doctrine of Śaraṇāgati. No doubt Śaraṇāgati is taught here as means for doing away with the impediments to the beginning of Bhaktiyoga. But that is not all that Śaraṇāgati can do. It is capable of yielding any kind of fruit. The statement here that it dispels the obstructing sins of Bhaktiyoga is only an illustration of its capacity to confer all kinds of fruits.

*Bhagavad Gītā* declares that Bhaktiyoga can be practised by four kinds of adhikarīs or persons : (1) by those who are desirous of acquiring wealth newly; (2) by those who want to get back their lost wealth; (3) by those who wish to attain the realization of their own soul free from all its shackles; and (4) by those who want to attain the Supreme Goal, viz., God Himself. All the four kinds of fruits can be attained by Śaraṇāgati also. Because of this Śaraṇāgati is declared in the Śāstras as an alternative to Bhaktiyoga. What is more, it can give Bhaktiyoga itself and through it Mokṣa.

That leads us to the study of Śaraṇāgati, the Doctrine of Self-surrender in its various aspects, like the persons qualified to practise it, its auxiliaries and its greatness. As it is the only means which is within the easy reach of all of us, and as it is, again the means that is being adopted now by all our Ācāryas for our redemption, we shall deal with it in some detail.

Before we conclude we give below a śloka of *Śrī Rahasya-  
raya-sāra* which describes briefly the various means and the nature of each one of them.

*Karma-jñānam ūpāsanam ca  
śaraṇa-vrajyeti ca avasthītān  
San-mārgān apavarga-sādhana-vidhau  
Sadvāraka-advārakān,  
Eka-dvyākṛti-yoga-sambhṛta-prthag-  
bhāvānubhāvān imān  
Samyak prekṣya śaraṇya-sārathī-girām  
ante ramante budhāḥ.*

—*Upāya-vibhāga-adhikāra.*

Karmayoga, Jñānayoga, Upāsana, (or Bhaktiyoga) as well as Śaraṇāgati have been prescribed as the good means for attaining the Mokṣa. Of these the first two (Karma and Jñāna) are indirect means to Mokṣa, while the other two (Bhakti and Śaraṇāgati) are direct means. Wise men who know well that some, out of these different means have a single nature and that others have a twofold nature delight in the last words (Carama-śloka) of the Charioteer who is the saviour of all (i.e., they prefer it).

(The single and two-fold nature of the different upāyas are: Karmayoga and Jñānayoga are means to Mokṣa through Bhaktiyoga. Therefore they have the single nature of being an indirect and auxiliary means to Mokṣa. Bhaktiyoga is a direct and independent means to Mokṣa and so it has the single nature of being only the direct means. But Śaraṇāgati or Prapatti has a two-fold nature. It has the nature of being an indirect and auxiliary means to Mokṣa in the case of some people who take to it for acquiring the competency to perform Bhaktiyoga, which is a direct means to Mokṣa. It has also the nature of being a direct and independent means as it leads to Mokṣa without depending on anything else to those who adopt it as Mokṣopāya.)

## 21. Fitness for Śaraṇāgati

Bhaktiyoga and Śaraṇāgati are the two direct and independent means for the attainment of Mokṣa. The mumukshu or the person aspiring for Salvation is free to choose any one of the two; they are two alternatives for the same goal. At the same time it is stated that the choice is not absolute, but restricted; for if a man wants to take to Bhaktiyoga, he must have some specific qualifications; and if one wants to adopt Śaraṇāgati he must have some other qualifications. In order to attain the one goal, Mokṣa, some persons can choose only Bhaktiyoga and some others only Śaraṇāgati according to their competency. Of the two means, Bhaktiyoga is a difficult and long-drawn process and it has to be preceded by the practice of Karmayoga and Jñānayoga. It has got to be supplemented by the practice of the daily rites throughout the life, and even several lives of the Upāsaka. Even at the last moment when he departs from the final body, he must, by his own effort, think of God. Besides all this, the very beginning of the practice of Bhaktiyoga is rendered possible only by the

performance of a Śaraṇāgati at the outset to get rid of the sins that stand in its way. If any flaw or lapse occur in the course of the practice, it has to be expiated for and Śaraṇāgati is prescribed as a sure means of expiation. Thus Śaraṇāgati has an important place in the sphere of Bhaktiyoga. There it is only auxiliary, and is therefore called 'Aṅga-prapatti'. As contrasted with this, when Prapatti or Śaraṇāgati is adopted as an independent means for Mokṣa, it is known as 'Svatantraprapatti'. It is with this kind of Śaraṇāgati that we are chiefly concerned. First we shall deal with the fitness of a person for adopting it.

Śaraṇāgati or the Doctrine of Self-surrender is less difficult and therefore it is within the easy reach of all persons. It is known by several names as Prapatti (Seeking redemption at the hands of God), and Bharasamarpaṇa or Bharanyāsa (Surrender of the burden of protection to God); sometimes it is referred to as Adṛṣṭārtha (the Invisible Stroke of Fortune).

Śaraṇāgati is reckoned as one of the Brahma-vidyās revealed by the Upanishads as a means for Mokṣa. Then it gets the name of Nyāsa-vidyā. The Bhagavat Śāstras or Pāñcharātra Samhitā throw great light upon the several aspects of Śaraṇāgati—its essential nature, auxiliaries, the qualifications of a person to adopt it, and the life of a person after adopting it. The Purāṇas and Itihāsas narrate stories which serve to illustrate the several aspects of Śaraṇāgati, in human life and also in sub-human life. The Ālvars swear by Śaraṇāgati to win the Grace of God. Nammālvār practised it at the feet of Thiruveṅkaṭam-uḍayān, the Lord of the Tirupati Hills, in one *Tiru-vai-mozhi* (6-10). He is often referred to as 'Prapanna-santāna-kūṭastha'—the foremost in the line of Prapannas, those that resort to Prapatti. Our Ācāryas have also practised it both for their own redemption and that of their disciples and their kinsmen. They have popularised it by their works. Śrī Vedānta Deśika has written several works on this subject. It is he that has given a systematic and scientific treatment to the Doctrine of Śaraṇāgati and established its validity as a means for Mokṣa quoting the scriptures. The *Gadya-traya*, the three delectable prose-poems of Śrī Rāmānuja are a fine elucidation of this doctrine and its practice. Out of the three Gadyas, Śaraṇāgati-Gadya is like a manual of applied Śaraṇāgati and is very popular among Śrīvaiṣṇavas. This work is of special interest to us as it has a reference to an important incident in the life of Śrī

Rāmānuja on a Paṅguṇi Uttaram day. We shall therefore take up Śaraṇāgati-gadya for a detailed treatment.

The full-moon day in the month of Paṅguṇi when the moon is in conjunction with the Uttarā-nakṣatra is called the Paṅguṇi Uttaram day. It is a day of great significance and festivals are celebrated in all temples. There takes place a grand festival at Śrīraṅgam, which is unique for several reasons. Lord Raṅganātha goes to the shrine of Śrīraṅga Nācciyār where He is received and taken to a special mandapam set apart for that day's festival. Raṅganātha and Raṅganāyaki occupy the same couch and remain side by side throughout the day and night. This occurs only once in a year and that is on the Paṅguṇi Uttaram day. Devotees throng in great numbers to worship the Divya-Dampatis (Divine Couple) and become blessed. They are able to see with their physical eyes the great truth declared by the Śāstras that the Divya-Dampatis together are the Supreme Godhead.

On one such Paṅguṇi Uttaram day, Śrī Rāmānuja went to the shrine to worship Lord Raṅganātha and Śrīraṅga Nācciyār. The vision of the Divine Couple on the same couch sent him into raptures and gave rise to a stream of thoughts in his mind. He concluded that it would be a good opportunity to perform Śaraṇāgati at the feet of the Divya Dampatis as laid down by the scriptures. The next moment the Śaraṇāgati was performed by Śrī Rāmānuja and Śaraṇāgati-gadya was born of him for the benefit of the humanity at large. It is a complete record first hand of all that happened on that memorable occasion—a record of Rāmānuja's seeking refuge at the feet of the Divya-Dampatis, his prayer to Them and Their own reply blessing him with all that he prayed for.

Śaraṇāgati-gadya is in the form of a dialogue, first between Śrī Rāmānuja and Lakṣmī (here Śrīraṅga Nācciyār) and later between him and Nārāyaṇa, (here Raṅganātha). At the outset Śrī Rāmānuja performs Śaraṇāgati at the feet of Lakṣmī and prays that She must bless with success his desire to perform Śaraṇāgati to the Lord. Lakṣmī not only grants his prayer at once, but also blesses him that he will obtain all the boons resulting therefrom.

Then Śrī Rāmānuja invokes Bhagavān in impassioned language making special reference to His essential nature, personal features, auspicious qualities, sentient ornaments and weapons,



Divine Consorts Śrī, Bhūmi and Nīlā, His retinue of Nityasuris or eternally free Angels, and His Glory in the form of the two Vibhūtis of Enjoyment and Sport (Bhoga and Līlā). Śrī Rāmānuja winds up this invocation by giving expression to his own destitute state and performing Śaraṇāgati at the feet of the Bhagavān with the appropriate Dvaya Mantra.

Next Śrī Rāmānuja repeats some ślokas from *Jitānte Stotra* and from *Bhagavad Gītā* which are in the form of a dialogue. By these he indicates how he has no other protector than Bhagavān and no other goal than service to Him. He also apologises for his shortcomings and prays that all his sins of commission and omission may be pardoned—sins against God, sins against his devotees and sins of an unpardonable nature. He concludes his prayer with a request that he may be blessed with the divine experience and enjoyment of the Bliss of a Jñāni about whom Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā—"It is my view that the Jñāni is my own soul—a Soul of the Super-Soul."

The last section of the *Śaraṇāgati-gadya* contains the reply of Bhagavān to Śrī Rāmānuja vouchsafing pardon for all his since because of his utterance of the Dvaya Mantra and assuring him of the Bliss of Service to Him. To reassure him, Bhagavān repeats the promise of redemption given by Him in His incarnations as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa to Vibhīṣaṇa and Arjuna respectively on the sea-shore and on the chariot-board. He concludes with words of solace which dispel all fear and despair from the mind of Śrī Rāmānuja and leave him full of hope and joy.

That in short, is the *Śaraṇāgati-gadya* which is even now chanted before the Divya-Dampatis—Lord Raṅganātha and Śrīrāṅga Nācciyār—with great love and zeal year after year on the Paṅguṇi Uttaram day—a festival day of great religious and literary importance. What is more, it is chanted every day by every Śrīvaiṣṇava before the God, Immanent or Incarnate, and thereby, peace of mind and hope of the future are attained.

So *Śaraṇāgati-gadya* graphically describes the practice of Śaraṇāgati. Before a person resorts to this means, he must find out if he is qualified to do it. The two important qualifications are: (1) inability to take to all other upāyas; and (2) an aversion to all other fruits than Mokṣa. The first is known as ākiñcānya, and the second

ananya-gatitva. A person is not able to resort to other upāyas for three reasons. Firstly he has not the requisite knowledge to understand them; secondly he lacks the strength of mind and body to practise them; and thirdly he is not able to put up with the unavoidable delay in the attainment of the Mokṣa—the delay which always goes with those upāyas. Such a person is called an akiñchana (destitute). He has a natural aversion to all fruits other than Mokṣa. Mokṣa is a fruit that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa alone can give. So it follows that this person does not resort to any other god for the realization of his desires. He is called *ananyagati* (helpless).

If a person has these two qualifications, he is eminently fitted to adopt Śaraṇāgati. Birth, sex, age, learning, status—nothing counts. So all are eligible to adopt Śaraṇāgati, the means easy and efficient.

Śrī Vedānta Deśika has beautifully expressed in a śloka all these ideas with reference to the fitness of a person to adopt Śaraṇāgati as a means. Here is that śloka with its English rendering:

*Bhaktyādaṁ śaktyabhāvaḥ pramītirahitā  
 śāstrataḥ paryudāsah  
 Kālakṣepākṣamatvam tviti niyāti—vaśāt  
 āpatadbhīḥ chaturbhiḥ  
 Eka-divi-tryādi-yoga-vyatibhidura-  
 nijādhikriyāḥ samśrayante  
 Santaḥ Śrīṣam svatantra-prapadana-  
 vidhinā muktaye nirviśaṅkāḥ.*

—*Prapatti-yogyu-adhikaraḥ.*

(1) Absence of ability to adopt such upāyas as Bhakti-yoga, (2) lack of the requisite knowledge, (3) prohibition by the scriptures of the adoption of such means, and (4) inability to put up with any delay in attaining Mukti; these four, occurring either single\* or in combinations of two, three or four, by virtue of adrishta (resulting from meritorious deeds performed in the past) are qualifications of varied kinds for performing direct and independent Prapatti to the Lord of Lakṣmi. Good men resort to it and are free from all doubt for the attainment of Mokṣa.

Those who have only one of these four are of four classes, those who have any two of them are of six, those who have any three are of four and those who have all the four are one.

## 22. The Aṅgas or Accessories of Śaraṇāgati

Śaraṇāgati or Self-surrender is the only means that can be adopted by us for the redemption of our souls. It is referred to in Śāstras by different names like Nikṣepa, Nyāsa, Sannyāsa and Tyāga. Śaraṇāgati is said to be sixfold and thereby it gets the name of **Ṣaḍaṅgayoga** as distinguished from **Bhaktiyoga** which is known as **Aṣṭāṅgayoga** because of the eight aṅgas or accessories that constitute it. Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi are the eight aṅgas. Of these Samādhi is the aṅgī, though it is included in the aṅgas or accessories. In the same way out of the six aṅgas in Ṣaḍaṅgayoga, **Ātma-nikṣepa** is the aṅgī, though included in the accessories.

In the following śloka of *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā* we have the names of the six aṅgas:

*Ānukūlyasya samkalpaḥ prātikūlyasya varjanam,  
Rakṣisyati iti viśvāsaḥ goptrtvavaraṇam tathā,  
Ātmanikṣepa-kārpanye saḍvīdhā saraṇāgatih.*

Intention to do whatever is pleasing to the Lord (**Ānukūlyasya samkalpaḥ**), the avoidance of whatever is displeasing to Him (**Prātikūlyasya varjanam**), the intense faith that He will afford protection when sought (**mahā-viśvāsa**), begging His protection (**goptrtvavaraṇam**), the surrender of the self (**ātmanikṣepa**) and the feeling of helplessness (**kārpanya**)—are the six kinds of Śaraṇāgati. That one of these is the **aṅgi** and the others are **aṅgas** are evident from the following: "Nyāsa or self-surrender which has the word **nikṣepa** for a synonym has five **aṅgas**."

When it is realized that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is the Over-soul who pervades everything and that all things exist only for His purpose, all people will, with great care and earnestness, carry out the dictates of the Śāstras, which are but His commands. They will never do what is prohibited by the Śāstras, nor will they ever fail to carry out what is prescribed. Thus they will try to do only that which pleases Him and will avoid whatever is displeasing to Him. These are the two aṅgas known as **Ānukūlya-samkalpa** and **Prātikūlya-varjana**.

Intense faith or **Mahā-viśvāsa** is the next aṅga. The person must have faith that the Lord will certainly hear his prayers and

help him. This faith makes the person perform Śaraṇāgati without any hesitation and keeps him free from anxiety about the realization of his desires.

Gopṭṛva-varaṇa or the Supplication for protection is another aṅga or accessory. The value of an object will be realized only when a person longs to have it and gets it. A thing given unasked will cease to be a puruṣārtha—an object of yearning. So a person must pray to the Lord to save him, i.e., invoke Him to be his protector. True the Lord is omniscient and therefore knows the thoughts of others. He is Omnipotent and so can do anything. He is also merciful and so is eager to help others by removing their distress. The presence of these qualities in the Lord does not debar us from resorting to some means to merit His mercy. On the other hand the Lord expects us to make a request for help before He grants our desires. That is in line with the way of the world.

Kārpaṇya or the feeling of being helpless is another aṅga. A person is said to possess this aṅga when he is conscious of the fact that by himself he has no capacity either to know other upāyas or practise them. Absence of pride in the man consequent to his incapacity comes under this. Or the humble act that invokes the pity of the Lord is also kārpaṇya. All these induce the mercy of the Lord and make Him protect him. This aṅga is useful in another way also. It keeps away the temptation in the person for resorting to other means of saving himself, forgetting for the moment his innate incapacity.

Ātma-nikṣepa or the surrender of the self is the Aṅgī or the important thing to which all the foregoing five are accessories. Whenever there is a Śaraṇāgati, all these six—one aṅgī and five aṅgas—will be found in some form or other. In some places some may be implicit and in others explicit. Such Śaraṇāgati can be performed for the attainment of all kinds of desires—be they of the world here or of the world beyond.

Here is an illustration of the Śaraṇāgati that may be performed by a person for realizing some thing in this world. Suppose there is a person who has got some property or wealth which he is not able to keep safe, and wants to deposit it with some other person capable of doing it. It will be seen that the man intends to do what is pleasing to that other person and avoids

doing things which will displease him. He believes that the person so trusted can keep it safe and will do so, if required. He tells him of his own inability to take care of it and begs him to be its custodian. Then he entrusts the object to his care and sleeps care free without any fear and with his arms on his chest.

There are several episodes in the Rāmāyaṇa which serve as illustrations for this doctrine of Śaraṇāgati. Rāmāyaṇa is therefore termed as a Śaraṇāgati-Veda by Śrī Vedānta Deśika in his work named *Abhayapradāna-sāra*. The episode of Vibhīṣaṇa-Śaraṇāgati is spoken of as Śaraṇāgati-Upanishad. It is one of the places in the Rāmāyaṇa where all the accessories of Śaraṇāgati are present as we shall presently see.

Rāvaṇa committed the heinous sin of carrying away Sītā and keeping her in captivity in Laṅkā. Vibhīṣaṇa, his virtuous brother, advised him to restore Sītā to Rāma and make amends for his sins. He also said that only then they could live in peace and happiness. This shows that Vibhīṣaṇa had the desire to do what was pleasing to Rāma. This is the aṅga of Śaraṇāgati known as Ānukūlya-samkalpa.

But Rāvaṇa did not heed to the advice. On the other hand, in a fit of anger he spurned him and roared that he was a traitor and an ungrateful wretch. Vibhīṣaṇa realized that there was no use of advising him and decided that he must no longer have anything to do with Rāvaṇa or his possessions, and should not even remain in his country. So he rose up and flew at once to the other shore of the ocean where Rāma was camping with his army of monkeys. As he came, he declared: "I have given up my wife and children"; "Laṅkā, friends, wealth all, all have I abandoned." By these words of Vibhīṣaṇa it is clear that he severed all contact with Laṅkā and Rāvaṇa. Therefore he had the intention to abandon whatever would displease Rāma. And that is the aṅga, Prātikūlya-varjana.

That Vibhīṣaṇa had the state of kārpaṇya or helplessness can be seen from his own words that he had incurred the displeasure of the powerful Rāvaṇa and so was in need of a protector. He prays for protection at the hands of Rāma and so the aṅga of Goptṛtva-varaṇa also is in Vibhīṣaṇa.

Vibhīṣaṇa had great confidence in the good nature and ability of Śrī Rāma. Therefore he came to Rāma without fear or

hesitation though he was coming from the enemy camp direct. He declared that he was seeking refuge at the feet of Rāma, who was the supreme protector of the world. This bold act shows his intense faith in Rāma, i.e., mahāviśvāsa. Vālmīki himself says about Vibhīṣaṇa that he was a **mahā-prājñah**—a person of great wisdom. Wisdom here lies in having intense faith (mahāviśvāsa) in Rāma.

Vibhīṣaṇa again prayed for protection at the hands of Rāma. The words 'śaraṇam gataḥ' denote Ātmanikṣepa, the aṅgī which is an important factor. He made an appeal to Sugrīva and others to entrust him to the care of Rāma. *Nivedayata mām kṣipram vibhīṣaṇam upasthitam*. It is only a reiteration of Ātmanikṣepa which is done here through the proper means, viz., Sugrīva and others who are devoted to the service of Rāma.

Thus Vibhīṣaṇa-śaraṇāgati is perfect in every way and it immediately yielded the fruit that Vibhīṣaṇa wanted viz., service to Rāma.

Such is the efficacy of the doctrine of Śaraṇāgati, properly performed. But even the learned entertain, with apparent justification, some doubts about this doctrine. We shall state the doubts and clear them as shown by Śrī Deśika.

### 23. Mahāviśvāsa—the ~~most~~ difficult of the Aṅgas.

We saw that Prapatti is one of the means for attaining Mokṣa and it is easy to perform and does not require the aid of anything else excepting the five aṅgas or accessories. All these aṅgas must be present wherever a Prapatti is performed. Amongst the five, Mahāviśvāsa or Supreme Faith is considered very important. That is why some texts declare that Prapatti is Mahāviśvāsa itself. Its importance lies in the difficulty in having it. We can understand the difficulty in having such a faith, if we remember the nature of Bhagavān who is an impartial Ruler, the nature of ourselves who are ever prone to transgress the laws of God and also the greatness of the fruit we are hankering after (Mokṣa).

To explain: there are five qualities in Bhagavān which create a doubt in our mind whether it will be possible for us to approach Him for the realization of our desire. At the same time when we look at ourselves we have five qualities, which when viewed in juxtaposition with those of Bhagavān, only confirm our doubt and

act as a hindrance to our having the Supreme faith in the efficacy of Prapatti, and thus prevent its proper performance for lack of one of the accessories. Now we shall deal with the five qualities of Bhagavān one by one placing in juxtaposition those of ours also in the respective order and show how it is almost impossible to have the Mahāviśvāsa or Supreme Faith which is so essential for the performance of Prapatti especially for attaining Mokṣa.

(1) Bhagavān is omniscient and omnipotent. He knows everything that we do or think, and we can conceal nothing from Him. As for us, (1) we have been from time immemorial transgressing the dictates of the Śrutis and Smṛtis which are His laws and committing sins. As He knows all our transgressions, he is displeased and angry with us. If He is weak, we may defy Him and escape punishment. As He is also omnipotent, Bhagavān will see that the punishment is duly executed and no one can interfere. So we, with our propensity for sinning, cannot think of approaching Him.

(2) Bhagavān is the dispenser of Justice and He gives rewards in proportion to the karma performed by us. As an impartial judge, He will confer favours on those that abide by His laws and inflict punishment on those that violate them. (2) We have only unlimited transgressions for our credit, for which we deserve only eternal damnation as punishment. But we are hankering after a fruit beyond measure.

(3) Bhagavān does not stand in need of anything from any one, high or low. So no one can think of winning Him over by giving Him something or doing some help. (3) What we can do is something very insignificant, in return for which we expect the highest goal of life, namely Mokṣa.

(4) Bhagavān cannot be easily influenced to take action unlike other gods who are easily propitiated and persuaded to grant the desires quickly. (4) But our desire is to attain Mokṣa, which can be attained only after a very long time, at the end of this life itself, if not earlier.

(5) Bhagavān is destitute of equals or superiors. He is the Supreme Being and all others are below Him. No one can compel Him to do anything. (5) We are but humble supplicants before Him craving for His favour. He may not condescend to show us His favour.

When we think of the qualities, five in Bhagavān and five in us each to each, our mind will naturally be obsessed with a doubt whether the Prapatti we do will secure for us the desired fruit. This doubt will stand in the way of Mahāviśvāsa which is an important aṅga.

But fortunately for us there are five features in Bhagavān, each of them having a specific property, the realization of which will dispel the doubts in our mind and pave the way for Mahāviśvāsa. The five features along with the respective specific properties are: (1) Helpful recommendation (Puruṣākāra from Lakṣmī) with its specific property that it cannot be refused. (2) The relationship of the Master to His servants which cannot be annihilated by anyone. (3) Attributes and qualities like love to creatures which are strengthened by the unconditioned nature of His Grace. (4) The will or determination of Bhagavān to redeem the souls which can be accomplished without any external aid. (5) The magnanimous nature of Bhagavān by which He feels that, by saving others, He is doing something for His own benefit or satisfaction. He regards the gain of those that are below Him as His own gain.

It may be asked how these five features with their specific properties dispel our doubts (about the attainment of salvation by Prapatti)—doubts caused by the thought of the five qualities in Bhagavān and the five in us already referred to. The answer is:

(1) It is true that Bhagavān is **all-knowing** and all-powerful and so knows all our transgressions. We with our burden of sins cannot go near Him for fear of punishment. But the helpful recommendation of Lakṣmī who is our Mother, is such that He cannot ignore it. He forgives all our faults which stand in the way of His being accessible like the king who pardons the faults of the servants of the harem on the recommendation of the queen. He appears as if He is unaware of our faults and is easily accessible.

(2) Though it is true again that Bhagavān grants the fruits in proportion to the Karma that we do, and the Prapatti we perform is not a great Upāya and is a mere gesture of a good act and so cannot secure a great fruit, still Bhagavān becomes pleased with the Prapatti and confers on us fruit beyond measure which is ours by right as if by way of inheritance owing to our relationship with Him. He is our unconditional Master and we are His unconditional



servants. This relationship is so natural and strong that it can never be dissolved by anyone—either by Bhagavān, or by ourselves or by both jointly.

(3) Though Bhagavān has all objects of desire and He does not require any help or assistance, He is so compassionate by nature that He looks upon the little action (Prapatti) that we perform as if it were an act of supreme help to Him. He feels grateful and acts accordingly like a generous king who is won over even by little tokens of homage.

(4) Bhagavān does not generally respond to the petitions as quickly as the other deities do. Even to those who adopt means other than Prapatti prescribed by Śāstras, He grants the fruits with some delay. But in the case of those who have no other protector and who seek His help by performing Prapatti, He grants with all generosity whatever they want at the time prescribed by them, at once or later, by his mere will which requires no other help or aid.

(5) Though Bhagavān has no equals or superiors, He evinces so much of solicitude for us that He encourages us to come to Him and fulfils our desires without any consideration for our status or rank. He makes us feel that we are obliging Him when we receive His help and not as if He condescends to bestow something on us who are below Him.

To put it briefly: We feel we are helpless as we have not the competency to perform Karmayoga and the like. The fruit we desire to attain is out of all proportions to the means (Prapatti) we adopt; for the upāya involves no physical strain, expenditure of money or length of time or co-operation of others etc. It is easy to perform since it involves a single mental act or a single utterance with only a general understanding of the meaning of the words as a whole. The fruit we require after doing this upāya is Mokṣa itself, and that not only for ourselves who in no way deserve it because of our sinful nature, but also for those connected with us and at a time prescribed by us. When we think of all this naturally the doubt arises in our mind about the efficacy of Prapatti as a means for the attainment of Mokṣa. But as shown already a reflection on the special features in Bhagavān removes the doubt and gives the Mahāviśvāsa. The doubt comes in analogy with our experience in the world and it is also dispelled likewise. The difficulty in

**Mahāviśvāsa** or Supreme Faith is really great. Having this in mind **Appullar**, the great Ācārya of Śrī Vedānta Deśika said: "It is strange to prescribe this difficult upāya with supreme faith as an easy alternative to **Bhaktiyoga**. It is like asking a man who pleads inability to pay a bundle of sesame stalks which would yield a kalam of seeds to pay in its place a kalam of oil as though it were less difficult." For the quantity of seeds required to extract a kalam of oil will be surely much more than a kalam of seeds.

All this is true in a general way. Any amount of learning may not help a man have the Supreme Faith. It is only the grace of the Ācārya that will confer it on him. Once the man has the Grace, God in his infinite Mercy gives the Mahāviśvāsa "Supreme Faith" with which he performs the Prapatti to secure Mokṣa.

## 24. The Performance of Prapatti

*Abhīṣṭe dussādhe svata itarato vā kvacana tad-*

*Bharanyāsam yāchñānvitam abhivadanti prapadanam,*

*Itaḥ paścāt asmadyatananirapekṣeṇa bhavātā*

*Samarthyo'sāvarthastviti mativiśeṣam tad aviduḥ.*

—*Rahasyatrayasāra Sāṅgaprapanādhikāra*

[When a desired object is incapable of attainment by oneself or by others, Prapatti is said to be the placing of the responsibility or burden of securing it on somebody who is capable of doing so with a request or supplication. It is declared to be the specific thought such as (the following):— "This object should be accomplished for me by you without expecting any effort of mine—beyond this."]

Those who have not got the capacity for adopting the **Bhaktiyoga** owing to their not being qualified for it for want of knowledge and capacity have to take to Prapatti. Prapatti is easy because it does not require any great knowledge or any difficult accessory. It is to be performed only once along with all its accessories or aṅgas, which are five in number.

In this the surrender of the Self is the important part (aṅgī) in the case of a seeker after Mokṣa (Mumukṣu). He must do it with the realization that he has no independence either in the act of Prapatti or in the enjoyment of the fruit thereof. This will result

from the thought that he is absolutely dependent upon the Lord and that he is His śeṣa, *i.e.*, that he exists only for Him; and also that he is not dependent either on himself or any one else and that he does not exist either for himself or for any one else. Again he must realize that he is incapable of independently protecting himself as well as those that are said to belong to him. The responsibility of protecting these is that of the Lord, for He is the Universal Protector. Further the fruit of such protection should also be considered to pertain to the Lord as He is the chief beneficiary. Even as the modifications of the Acetana are for His pleasure, the benefits granted to the Cetanas are also for His pleasure. It is seen in the world that a man of aesthetic taste delights himself by making dolls of silver or gold, adorning them with ornaments and admiring their beautiful appearance. He equally delights himself by keeping a parrot in a cage, feeding it with milk and allowing it to fly as he pleases. In the case of the dolls they are insentient and do not derive any pleasure when they are adorned or decorated; but they are entirely for the delight of the person to whom they belong. With reference to the parrot which is a sentient being, it derives some pleasure when it is fed with milk and when it is let out to fly. But the delight of the parrot is only subordinate to the delight of its master who keeps it for his entertainment. In the same way even though the Cetana, like the parrot, may be the recipient of the fruit of protection, it is only subordinate to the pleasure of Īśvara, who is the chief beneficiary. In the case of the Acetana, the pleasure is entirely that of Īśvara.

With this thought in his mind, a person can perform Prapatti for attaining Mokṣa even though he has not a clear knowledge of the essential nature of his soul, his body and the like. It is enough if he surrenders his soul with the little knowledge that nothing is his own and everything belongs to the Lord.

When we consider Prapatti in detail, there are six parts in it—five aṅgas and one aṅgī. Yet in the actual performance they constitute one act which is performed in all its entirety at one moment. It is much like the action of an archer in discharging an arrow for hitting a target. Before the archer actually discharges the arrow, he performs several acts preliminary to it. He perceives the object, takes the arrow, fits it to the bow, takes aim and finally discharges the arrow. But all this is accomplished in the fraction of a second.

This single act of the performance of Prapatti is to be preceded by the following four thoughts: (1) the giving up of the thought that I am the doer (Kartṛtva-tyāga); (2) the giving up of the thought of *Mine* (that there is anything belonging to me) (Mamatā-tyāga); (3) the giving up of the fruit of the action (Phala-tyāga); and (4) the giving up of the thought that what one does is the means for the attainment of the fruit (phalopāyatva-tyāga).

When a person realizes that he is entirely dependent on the Lord throughout the existence of the Soul, he will give up the thought that he is the doer of an act; for he knows that the doership has been vouchsafed to him by the Lord. This is Kartṛtva-tyāga. Again when he realizes that he himself and all that belongs to him exist by their very nature solely for the fulfilment of the purposes of the Lord, he will give up the thought also of *Mine* (Mamatā-tyāga); for they are for the Lord and therefore they are His. For the same reason he will give up the thought also of the fruit of his action (Phala-tyāga), because the fruit belongs primarily to the Lord. The last is the giving up of the thought that the Prapatti he does is the means for the attainment of the fruit (Phalopāyatva-tyāga); for Prapatti is insentient and therefore is incapable of possessing the will to grant the fruit. It cannot, therefore, be the direct cause of the fruit, Mokṣa, whereas Īśvara is the real Upāya. It is he alone that confers the Mokṣa on the person being pleased by the Prapatti performed by him.

Thus, since the Lord is the principal cause of everything from the time of giving the man the body and the senses to the time of his doing the Prapatti by uttering the Dvaya mantra, since the Lord is possessed of the will and the desire to show His Grace and is the immediate and direct cause of the final fruit, He alone is the Upāya for the fruit and not Prapatti which is insentient and which is performed for winning the Grace of the Lord. Along with this mental background, with the reverent bowing down to the succession of the Ācāryas and with the utterance of the Dvaya Mantra, Prapatti or the surrender of the Soul must be performed, of course, preceded by its five aṅgas or accessories, viz., Ānukūlyasya saṁkalpa —the intention to do whatever is pleasing to the Lord; Prātikūlyavarjana —the avoidance of whatever is displeasing to Him; Mahāviśvāsa —the supreme faith that He will afford

protection; *Gopṭṛtvavarāṇa* —begging Him to be the protector, and *Kārapaṇya* —the feeling of helplessness.

Such is the manner in which Prapatti has to be performed with all its *aṅgas* in a second, and it has been briefly stated for our benefit as follows by Naḍādur Ammāl, the Ācārya of Appullar who is Deśika's Ācārya:— "I have been doing from beginningless time what is displeasing to Thee (*Bhagavān*); and therefore I am wandering in this *Saṁsāra*. From this day onwards I will do what is pleasing to Thee. I will not do what will displease Thee. I have no capital with which I can attain Thee. I have made up my mind to seek Thee alone as my *Upāya*. Be Thou my *Upāya*. Hereafter either in the removal of what is evil or in the attainment of what is good I have no further responsibility."

In this context it will be useful to understand the differences in the forms of the Prapatti that is done by different persons and that is done for the attainment of different fruits or *Puruṣārthas*. In a Prapatti there are three kinds of *samarpaṇa*—(1) *Svarūpa samarpaṇa* or the surrender of the Self; (2) *Bharasamarpaṇa* or the surrender of the responsibility of protection; and (3) *Phalasamarpaṇa* or the surrender of the fruit. The seekers of *Mokṣa* come under two heads, *Bhaktas* and *Prapannas*—*Bhaktas* who practise *Bhaktiyoga* for attaining *Mokṣa*, and *Prapannas* who adopt Prapatti for the same. The surrender of the Self (*Svarūpa-samarpaṇa*) and the surrender of the fruit (*Phalasamarpaṇa*) are common to both of them. If a person has no other *Upāya* and therefore is an *akiñcana*, the surrender of the burden of protection is an additional factor in his case. The surrender of the responsibility will be found in the case of all *prapannas* whatever may be the object desired by them. The surrender of the Self and of the fruit arising therefrom is an additional requirement to those *Prapannas* who are desirous only of *Mokṣa*.

With this the section on the *Upāya* or *Hita* (the Means) comes to an end. The next section will be devoted to the description of the *Puruṣārtha* or the Fruit that results from the performance of Prapatti. The first topic in that section will be the Characteristics of a *Prapanna*—of him who has performed the Prapatti.

### III. PURUṢARTHA—(THE GOAL)

#### 25. Characteristics of a Prapanna

*Svāpodbodhavyatikaranibhe bhogamokṣāntarāle*

*Kālam kañchit jagati vīdhinā kenachit sthāpyamānāḥ*

*Tattvopāyaprabhṛtviṣaye svāmidattām svaniṣṭhām*

*Śeṣam kṛtvāśirasi kṛtināḥ śeṣam āyurnayanti*

*—Rahasyatrayasāra.*

In the interval between this life of worldly enjoyment and Mokṣa—(an interval) which is like the mingling of the state of sleep and the waking state—some destiny has placed Prapannas for a time, and they pass the rest of their life wearing on their heads, the garland of their niṣṭhā in regard to the Tattva, Upāya and Puruṣārtha, which has been vouchsafed to them by the Lord.

(In the First Section it was stated that a wise man will acquire from the Ācāryas a knowledge of the Realities, the Means and the Goal—Tattva, Hita and Puruṣārtha. This knowledge will be purposeful only if he adopts the means for the attainment of the Supreme Goal. The Second section was devoted to a description of the Means. Here the Means is Prapatti by which he seeks refuge in the Lord. Prapatti along with its five aṅgas has to be practised only once and is accomplished in a moment. So, the moment it is performed, the Prapanna has done what he should do for his redemption and he is a Kṛta-kṛtya. There is nothing more for him to do on that score. From that moment his life becomes dedicated to the Lord. Every act of his is in the form of a Kaiṅkarya or service to the Lord which is the ultimate goal. After this life of service here, he becomes the Mukta or the Freed Self when a life of service to the Lord in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha begins—a service which has no end, and in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha from where there is no return to Samsāra. The Third section will deal with the Puruṣārtha which comes to the Prapanna in this world and the world beyond as a result of the Prapatti he has performed.)

Our Ācārya, Śrī Vedānta Deśika, has done the greatest service to us by delineating in *Rahasya-traya-sāra*, his *magnum-opus*, the life of a Prapanna who lives, moves and has his being in

the Lord from the moment he performs the Prapatti. Certain characteristics of the Prapanna have been described there which can well be taken as the ideal for any thinking man in this world. With that we begin this section.

Life in this world is not always a bed of roses. Men are likely to meet with success and failure, praise and contumely in the course of their life and become swayed by feelings of joy and sorrow. It is interesting and also instructive to see how a Prapanna reacts to the vicissitudes in life. He is neither elated by success, nor depressed by failure. He is calm and unruffled and treats both alike. When someone speaks ill of him or insults him, he does not become angry or sorrowful. He knows that the insult made was only to the body, and not to his Soul. For it is the body that is ugly or deformed and it is different from the Soul. When a Prapanna is reviled by a person, the latter unconsciously takes away the sins of the former. For the Śāstras declare that if a person harbours enmity or hatred and reviles another, the sin of the reviled person passes on to the reviler. So the Prapanna pities the reviler for his ignorance in taking away his sins. He also feels grateful to the reviler for the help the latter renders, though unconsciously. The Ājvārs and Ācāryas say, again and again, that all should reflect on their sins and demerits by introspection so that they may feel humble before God and pray for protection. The Prapanna also must reflect on his faults. If he has those sins or faults attributed to him by others, the latter only remind him of those faults and thus help him to think of them. So he is grateful to them. If he has not those faults, his gratitude to them is two-fold. For they warn him against the pitfalls of such vices that lie ahead of him and thus save him. Secondly they disburden him of some of his own sins. So he is grateful to them and also pities them for their ignorance in adding to their sins by their foolishness.

The Prapanna understands that the Jīvas are not independent and they cannot do anything by themselves. They are dependent on the Lord, Who is the master of all and Who is independent. Being prompted by Him, they act and contribute to the enjoyment of the Līla-Rāsa of the Lord. Thus both of them—the reviler and the reviled—act by the will of God. So the Prapanna does not entertain a feeling of hatred or ill-will against those who revile him. On the contrary he feels happy. He knows that if he is treated

with contumely by others which causes him pain, it is only the result of his own past actions and that a part of his past sins which have begun to operate in this life is being worked out. By this the distance that separates him from the Lord is being annihilated and the Prapanna only rejoices at this.

If a Prapanna has these characteristics, he may consider that he has realized his essential nature as being different from the Prakṛti on the one hand and from the Lord on the other and that he is in the proper state in relation to the knowledge of the Tattvas or Realities.

In the same way a person may consider that he has firm faith or nishṭhā in regard to the knowledge concerning the Upāya or Prapatti he has performed if he has the following features in him: Śvara is his only protector and there can be no protection for him either from himself or from others. Though he is confronted with causes of fear, even to the extent of death, he does not feel agitated or perturbed at the thought of his fate here and hereafter, but feels happy as to the approach of something desirable. He has the perfect confidence of having found a Protector, in whose hands lie the removal of evil and the attainment of good. So he does not make any further effort to save himself. The state of a Prapanna is like the condition of Sītā when she was in the forest with Rāma or in Laṅkā without him.

*Gajam vā vikṣya simham vā  
Vyāghram vā'pi varānanā,  
Nāhārayaṇī santrāsam  
Bāhū Rāmaṣya saṁśritā.*

—Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhya 60-20.

She was not frightened at the sight of the lions or elephants in the forest as she had the protecting hand of Rāma. When she was kept as a captive in Laṅkā and threatened by Rāvaṇa, she was not frightened and did not try to save herself by reducing Rāvaṇa to ashes by the fire of her chastity, but relied entirely on the effort of Rāma to save her. Even when Hanumān offered to take her to Rāma, she refused to be rescued and said that it would be in keeping with the nature of Rāma if He Himself defeated the Rākṣasas in a straight fight and rescued her. Sītā is the ideal for



the Prapanna and he must follow her example—Sītā, who treated with the same indifference the trees laden with lovely flowers and the Rākṣasis having a frightful mien.

*Śaraistu saṁkulām kṛtvā  
laṅkāṁ parabalārdanaḥ  
Mām nayed yadi kākutsaḥ  
tat tasya sadṛśam bhavet.*

*Naiṣā paśyati rākṣasyo  
nemān puṣpa-phala-drumān,  
Ekastahrdayā nūnam  
rāmam eva anupaśyati.*

—Rāmāyaṇa Sundara 16-25

The Prapanna, whose understanding is firmly fixed in the Puruṣārtha or the Supreme Goal, would not have any anxiety about the creature comforts or the maintenance of the body. Food and other things will come to him by themselves as a result of his past actions which have begun to operate in this life. He knows that even if he should move Heaven and Earth, he would not get more than what he is destined to get. He does not feel delighted on seeing pleasure, nor does he feel sorrowful when he sees pain. He does not avoid enjoyments which come to him by themselves, nor does he seek enjoyments which can be had only with effort. When he enjoys something pleasant or experiences something painful, he does so with the thought that one karma amongst a host of them gets itself exhausted by giving its fruit and therefore he is one step nearer God. He takes them as a gift of God who is preparing to take him to His own abode releasing him from the bondage of Karma.

Such is the ideal life of a Prapanna whose mind is firmly fixed in regard to the knowledge of the essential nature of his own self, of the upāya or the means and Puruṣārtha or the Supreme Goal of existence.

## 26. Post-prapatti Conduct of a Prapanna

*Santoṣārtham vimṛśati muhuḥ sadbhiradhyātmavidyām  
Nityam brute niśamayati ca svādu suvyāhṛtāni,*

*Angikurvan anaghalalitām vṛttim ādehapātāḥ  
Drṣṭādrṣṭasvabharavigame dattadrṣṭiḥ prapannaḥ.*

—Rahasyatrayasāra uttarakṛtyādhikāra

[A Prapanna follows until the fall of his body a code of conduct which is faultless and charming and has his eyes fixed on the absence of any responsibility in regard to things that are seen and that are yet to come. For the sake of delight he studies Vedānta again and again with good men, expounds the sweet and good words (of the Ālvārs and Ācāryas) to others when they come, and also listens to others when they explain them.]

The code of conduct followed by the Prapanna after the performance of Prapatti is unique and interesting. Though he is in the world, he is not of it. He has given up his connection with many things in the world, still he is connected in a way with certain things. His activities are delightful like the services of the Mukta to the Lord. He follows a line of conduct which is prescribed by the Śāstras and which is an end in itself. His life is dedicated to an unbroken chain of services to the Lord. In the course of it, one service is concluded so that it may give room for another. By such service the Prapanna wins the favour of the Lord which is the cause of further service. It is desirable for him to have more and more knowledge of the Lord and more and more devotion to Him, especially when he wants to enjoy the qualities of the Lord and do service to Him.

A desire for these is not forbidden, and so he can ask for them. Without feeling complacent that he knows everything, he must obtain clear and pure knowledge from the Gurus and he must also cultivate contact with those who are well-established in this knowledge. From their acts he must choose and practise what is in accordance with his own equipment and status. Observing his conduct he must not get conceited and must avoid the pitfalls of thinking he is superior to others, and others are inferior to him. Even if he has a vision of God, he must think that it is not due to any merit in him, but entirely by the Grace of God.

He must always remember his helplessness and dependence on the Lord which were his qualifications for adopting Prapatti for

his redemption. But by this feeling of utter unfitness and the loss of service to the Lord, resulting from his sins from beginningless time, the Prapanna should not fall into despair. On the contrary he must take courage by the words of the Lord that He comes again and again to offer protection and pardon all the sins of the Jivas, however heinous and numerous they may be. So without lamenting for what is past, he must make himself fit by carrying out the commands of the Lord. He must keep his body and senses pure by taking Sāttvic food and avoiding forbidden things.

As the Prapanna has completed what he must do by the performance of Prapatti, he has nothing more to do for attaining Mokṣa. Still as long as he is in this world he must abide by the Śāstras. He cannot do as he chooses or live as he likes. Śrī Deśika gives an illustration for the disciplined, yet free life of the Prapanna. Suppose there are some people who are waiting for a boat to cross a river in the course of their journey. A few of them may engage themselves in a play with dice as a pastime. They know that they will have to stop the game at any time on the arrival of the boat and so they play the game without stakes. Eventhough they play only to spend the time and without stakes, they throw the dice strictly in accordance with the rules of the game. The moment the boat arrives, they stop the game and get into the boat to cross the river. Similarly the Prapanna leads a life of detachment and performs the rites prescribed by the Śāstras, but not with an eye on the fruits.

Again the Prapanna spends his time in the enjoyment and service of the consecrated images (Arcā-idols) of God in temples and other holy places. He knows that God has come down in the form of the Arcā for the sake of His Bhaktas, and assumes the names and forms they choose to give Him. Though He is so easily accessible, He has all the Majesty and Purity natural to Him. A sight of the Arcā, from the pedestal from the foot to the crown on His head will dispel all the sins and will make a person free from all disbeliefs and other faults. The Prapanna feasts his eyes on the bewitching beauty of the Arcā and delights by the enjoyment of the qualities. He offers everything that he gets to the Lord and utilises it later as a remnant consecrated by God. In this the Prapanna is like Bharata who placed before Pādukas all the tributes that came and all the state-affairs that arose and acted in the appropriate way with reference to them.

The Prapanna is wedded to the Lord and His service, and looks upon this service as a wedded wife would look to the careful preservation of the holy thread of wedlock round her neck? A feeling of gratefulness to the Ācārya is pulsating through him every moment of his life; for he realizes that he owes to the Ācārya all his right knowledge and progress in the godly way. He is also grateful to the Lord Whose Grace was the first and important cause of all the benefits that have accrued to him at every stage.

In the course of this disciplined life of a Prapanna, there are some essential things which must be carefully practised by him and others which must be avoided in mind, speech and body. The most important of what must be forgotten is the taste for sense-pleasures lest his desire for Mokṣa should languish; and the most important of what is to be reflected on is the assistance given to him by the Ācārya. The chief thing that should be avoided by him in speech is the expression of his own excellence so that he may keep on the feeling of dependence and helplessness with which he performed the Prapatti. The chief thing that should be uttered by him is Dvaya Mantra so that he may ever have in mind the means he has adopted. With a view not to displease the Lord, the Universal Master, the most important of what he should avoid doing is the offence to those that know the Brahman and are devoted to it. The most important of what he should do is service to the Ācārya and to the devotees of the Lord which forms the outer limit of the service to the Lord. By this he does not miss occasions for the maximum enjoyment of the supreme goal of life.

In the case of a Prapanna, service to the Lord, is said to grow and extend to service to the devotees, because such is the desire as well as the will of the Lord. Eventhough the Śāstras declare that the Lord is the Supreme Soul of all souls, the Lord's view is that the Jñānis or Bhaktas are his Soul. He considers that service to the Bhakta will be like service to His Ātmā. As all the Jīvas are dependent on, and subordinate to the Lord, it is their bounden duty to carry out His will.

So the Prapanna does service not only to the Lord, but to His devotees also. There is propriety in this. The Lord is the master of all and as such He can make use of all as He likes. The Jīvas have no independence and so they must carry out His will. The Lord wants that those who are Śeṣa or subservient to Him must be

sub-servient to Bhāgavatas also who are dear to Him as Ātmā. So Śeṣatva or subservience of the Jīvas does not stop with the Lord, but extends to His Bhaktas. Similarly their service also extends to them, which pleases the Lord much more than service to Him does.

Here a doubt arises: A true devotee (or Bhāgavata) considers another Bhāgavata as his master and wants to do service to him as a Śeṣa. The other person also being a true devotee considers the former as his master and wants to serve him. How can one person be both a Śeṣi and Śeṣa (master and servant) in regard to the same person? We shall explain how there is no inconsistency in this and how such a thing is possible. We shall take one of our own actions for illustration. We rear Tulasi plants in our garden, water them daily and take care of them. Then we are serving the plants and they become our Śeṣi as they receive the benefit of our service. When we cull the Tulasi leaves for our use in the worship of God, we are the beneficiaries and therefore the Śeṣi, while the plant is for our service and therefore Śeṣa to us. Similarly one Bhāgavata may be the Śeṣi of another when he accepts the service of the latter on one occasion; he may be the Śeṣa or servant of the other on another occasion when he renders service to the other.

But there is this difference: When a Bhāgavata is the Śeṣa of another Bhāgavata, he is so not only by his own freewill, but by the will also of the Lord, Who is the independent Ruler of all. But when he is a Śeṣi or master, he agrees to be so only by the will of the Lord who wants him to be so. Since both of them know that they contribute to the delight of the Lord, whether they are Śeṣa or Śeṣi, they are also happy. Thus ultimately a true Prapanna is a Śeṣa or servant not only to the Lord, but is also Śeṣa or servant to those who are exclusively devoted to Him (i.e., Bhagavatas).

Similarly his service which begins with the Lord extends to the Bhāgavatas. This is a principle in Śrī Vaishṇavaism on which the Ālvārs and Ācāryas lay great emphasis and which is to be followed by a Prapanna. So service to Bhāgavatas is both a duty and a pleasure for the Prapanna and by such service he realizes highest limit of happiness so long as he is in the world.

## 27. Service of Prapanna

The life of a person after the adoption of Prapatti in this world is one of dedication to the Lord and His devotees (i.e. Śrī Vaiṣṇavas). There is propriety as well as justification if this dedication extends to Śrī Vaiṣṇavas also, as the Lord considers them as His Ātmā. In the view of the Lord, service rendered to Him is service to His body and service to Śrī Vaiṣṇavas is service to His Inner Soul.

The Prapanna should do what is most pleasing to the Lord, because the Prapanna is a Śeṣa or servant, who exists solely for the fulfilment of the purposes of the Lord Who is his Śeṣī. It may be asked in what way a Prapanna is going to be of help to the Lord. Who is the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. There is nothing that the Lord cannot have if He wants, and there is nothing that He cannot accomplish if He wills. The answer is—the Prapanna does not think that the Lord has some wants and that he is going to supply them by his acts. He feels so much overwhelmed by the spontaneous Grace of the Master and feels so proud of being His servant that he wants to do something by which he can show that he is not an insentient object, but a sentient being who realizes the Mercy of God and desires to express his gratitude. This act of the Prapanna full of gratefulness is given the name of 'Service'.

The service that the Prapanna renders to the Lord must be in accordance with the essential nature of his own self as a śeṣa. A servant must always try to please his master and avoid displeasing him. In this world a servant can know the will of his master and the way of pleasing him by sense-perception or inference, and act accordingly. But in the case of the Paramātmā, these instruments of knowledge are of no use as He is beyond them. So to know the Will of the Lord and the way of pleasing Him, the only means will be the Śāstras in the form of Vedas and Smṛtis which are His commands. So in the matter of serving the Lord, the Prapanna has to go only by the dictates of the Śāstras. He can please the Lord by shaping his acts only in that way; and the pleasure of the Lord is the only end he has in view.

The Prapanna has no other attractions. He has no desire for the enjoyment either of material wealth or of the Individual Self.

In fact he does not want to go even to Śrī Vaikuṇṭha to enjoy the Bhagavān. Service here he desires, and that as an end by itself. A person engaged in such disinterested service is called a Paramaikāntī. An Ekānti is one who desires to attain fruits like Aiśvarya and Kaivalya and who seeks the help of the Lord alone and of no one else to get it. His primary love is for the object of his longing, and his attachment to the Lord is only secondary; because, the Lord is only a means for the fruit. The moment the devotee attains the fruit, he has no use for the Lord and leaving Him, he begins to enjoy the fruit attained. But, for the Paramaikāntī the Lord is not only the means of attainment, but also the goal of endeavour. Unlike the Ekānti, he will not leave the Lord at any time, but will always be with Him. First he takes to the Lord as the means for Mokṣa, and later sticks to Him as the end. There is a higher type of Paramaikāntī who does not seek even the enjoyment of the Lord in Vaikuṇṭha, but longs eagerly to render service to Him, here and now. Ālvārs and Ācāryas are examples of this class of Paramaikāntins.

A Prapanna is wedded so much to the service of the Lord here that he does not care to think of anything else. There are two things in this world about which men may worry themselves, viz., the maintenance of the body and the redemption of their soul. The Karma done in the previous birth, which has given a person this body, will also automatically provide for its maintenance and so he need not worry himself about it. If he does so, he will be called a sceptic. He need not be anxious about the redemption of his soul either, as it is already in the hands of the Lord. Whose protection he has sought by Prapatti. If he has no worry of any kind, it does not mean he can live as he likes or act as he chooses, with his three organs—mind, speech and body—unmindful of the rules prescribed by the Śāstras. He must employ them in the proper manner in the service of the Lord which is his goal.

There is an anecdote in the life of Śrī Rāmānuja which is relevant to the context and worth narrating here. Śrī Rāmānuja was about to depart from the world. His disciples were overcome with sorrow and were standing around him in despair. Śrī Rāmānuja exhorted them in the name of Ālvandār to lead a life of service and discipline in the following words: "So long as a Prapanna is in the world, he must devote his life to the service of

the Paramātmā. This service is of five kinds: (1) to study Śrī Bhāṣya and spread the knowledge obtained therefrom; (2) if one feels it is beyond his ability, to study the writings of the Ālvārs and spread their knowledge; (3) if one is not competent to do that too, to do service in temples sanctified by the Ālvārs by weaving garlands, lighting lamps and so on; (4) if one is not able to do even that, to meditate on the meaning of Dvaya; (5) if one cannot do that also, to resort to a Śrī Vaiṣṇava who will consider him his own and spend his life with him."

Rāmānuja also added that a Prapanna should act cautiously and regulate his conduct towards people in this world, who, with reference to him, can be classified under three heads:—the favourable, the unfavourable and those who are neither the one nor the other. The favourable are Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, the devotees of Śrīman Nārayaṇa; the unfavourable are those who hate the Lord; and those who are neither are the ordinary men who do not love the Lord, nor hate Him. The sight of the favourable will be a source of joy to the Prapanna as that of flowers, moonlight, cool breeze and the like; at the sight of the unfavourable he is full of dread as at the sight of the serpent and the fire; at the sight of those who are neither favourable nor unfavourable, he will behave as at the sight of a piece of stone or wood, and will be indifferent. If they tend to become favourable, the Prapanna will help them by imparting knowledge of truth, otherwise he will pity them."

This is the right way of life for a Prapanna by which he can please the Lord, who stands as a father and mother, master and friend to him. It is up to the Prapanna to act in a way which will be in accordance with this unique relationship with the Lord. He must not do anything which will bring displeasure or disgust in the mind of the Lord who is his unconditioned relative in every form.

If a Prapanna, with such a noble ideal, should act differently it must be due to his attachment for material wealth and sense pleasures. If, by this temptation, he should treat a Śrī Vaiṣṇava with disregard or contempt, he would provoke the wrath of the Lord even as a man would provoke a king's anger if he treats the prince with disrespect. If a Prapanna, owing to his desire for wealth and the like, respects an unfavourable person, he causes disgust to the Lord even as a Queen will do in the mind of the king



if she unmindful of her status goes about begging and receiving alms from the mean and the unworthy. If a Prapanna should treat with respect those who are neither favourable nor unfavourable, the Lord will have no regard for him as his knowledge serves no useful purpose like that of one who cannot distinguish between a gem and a piece of stone. So the criterion for the acts of a Prapanna is that it must be pleasing to the Lord. What will please Him, and what will not, can be known only from the Śāstras as long as he is in this world and therefore all the acts of a Prapanna—whether they are the performance of daily rites or the rendering of service—must be according to the dictates of the Śāstras. The Prapanna will not go about doing as he likes violating the Śāstras lest he should cause displeasure to the Lord, who is everything to him. That apart, nothing causes greater distress to him than the displeasure of the Lord.

Thus the Prapanna lives, moves and has his being in the Lord and leads a life of dedication and service. The Lord, in turn, has the greatest love for him and showers His blessings on him. He confers several privileges on the Prapanna at every stage of his life, here and hereafter.

## 28. *Privileges of a Prapanna*

We saw that a Mumukṣu (Seeker after Release) acquires from the Ācāryas the knowledge of Tattva, Hita and Puruṣārtha, and adopts Śaraṇāgati or the Means of Self-surrender which is suited to his capacity. By this he earns the Grace of the Paramātmā, and attains the Goal. Paramātmā is endowed with innumerable qualities—all of them auspicious and pleasing. These qualities are usually classified under two heads: Paratva or those that proclaim His Superior Godhead, and Saulabhya or those that denote His easy accessibility. Of the latter, compassion Karuṇya and generosity Audārya are so natural to Him that He wants that all the souls in bondage should be redeemed and enabled to enjoy Infinite Bliss even as He and other Eternally Free Souls (Nityas) are doing. He is waiting for an opportunity to help them. But the Karma-bound Souls are either indifferent or averse to Him. If they should just turn to Paramātmā, He eagerly welcomes them. If they take one step in His direction, He walks ten steps towards them. If they quicken their pace, He rushes to them to greet and embrace them.

If they are true Bhaktas and have a longing to be with Him. He is much more eager to be with them. For Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Paramātmā says: "Bhaktas are my Inner Souls and my love for them is beyond description."

To this class of Bhaktas belongs the Prapanna who has realized his nature that he is Śeṣa to the Lord and exists solely to fulfil the purpose of the Lord. His life is one of dedication to the Lord and His service. He lives, moves and has his being in the Lord. For him union with God is pleasure and separation from Him is sorrow, wherefore he is known as Paramaikāntī. The Lord is equally attached to such a Paramaikāntī for whom He is both the Means and the Goal. Paramātmā, in His overflowing generosity showers on him boons and privileges though the latter does not long for them. The Śāstras declare in no uncertain terms that the Prapanna is by nature pure and purifying. The water that comes into contact with his feet becomes incomparably holy and can cleanse people of all their sins. Whatever is left after he has eaten will purify the person that takes it. His mere words are a sacred Mantra. A leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water offered by him is accepted by Paramātmā as though it is something far beyond His reach. For Paramātmā does not look at the value of the thing offered, but is particular about the mind behind it. He receives with His head services rendered by those who have supreme and exclusive devotion to Him, whereas He receives with His feet things offered by ordinary people without devotion. Such is the greatness of the Prapanna, even to a millionth part of whom no one in the world is equal.

The Lord is moved by this simple upāya to such an extent that even after conferring on the Prapanna all that belongs to Him, He feels that He has not been able to make sufficient recompense. This fact is made known to us by the words of Kṛṣṇa Himself when He says in a reminiscent mood: "That cry for help uttered aloud by Draupadi even from a distance calling me 'Govinda'—that cry is never away from my mind like a debt that has increased with the interest accumulated on it."

*Govindeti yadākrandat kṛṣṇā mām dūra-vāsinam,  
Rṇam pravṛddham iva me hṛdayānnāpasarpati*

—Nātisvasthamanā yayau

Sage Vedavyāsa also says the same about the state of mind of Śrī Kṛṣṇa at the time of His exit from the world: “Kṛṣṇa left the world with a heavy heart.” To explain: It is well-known that Draupadī was dragged to the Assembly Hall by Duśśāsana and was insulted by trying to disrobe her. Great Ācāryas like Droṇa and Bhīṣma were horror-struck and could not raise a voice of protest. The Pāṇḍavas were bound by dharma and so were helpless. Draupadī saw that there was no one to come to her rescue in that critical moment, and so throwing up her hands in despair and prayer, cried—“Kṛṣṇa, though Thou art in Dvārakā, I seek refuge in Thee. Pray, save me.” The next moment the miracle happened: there was a never-ending stream of sarees flowing from the body of Draupadī till Duśśāsana fell down by mere exhaustion. Thus Draupadī’s honour was saved then. Not satisfied with that, Śrī Kṛṣṇa took upon Himself the duty of protecting the Pāṇḍavas. So He helped them to annihilate their enemies in the war and get back their kingdom, and fulfilled the vow of Draupadī. Even after doing all this in return for Draupadī’s Śaraṇāgati, Kṛṣṇa felt that He was still indebted to her and so His heart was heavy at the time of His exit from the world.

In our Sampradāya, Ācārya Śrī Rāmānuja is known by several names, one of which is ‘Uḍayavar’ meaning ‘Possessor’ or ‘Master’. By means of his works like Śrībhāṣya and Gītā Bhāṣya Śrī Rāmānuja established and propounded the Upaniṣadic truth that Śrīman Nārayaṇa—here Lord Raṅganātha—is the Supreme Reality, Greatest Means, and Highest Goal—Para Tattva, Parama Hita and Parama Puruṣārtha. By this he was able to redeem the suffering humanity in a successful manner. Śrī Raṅganātha wanted to honour Śrī Rāmānuja for this noble act of redemption and so placed at the disposal of the Ācārya Śrī Rāmānuja all His possessions—Līlavibhūti and Nitya-vibhūti—including Himself. In commemoration of that act, He conferred upon Śrī Rāmānuja the name of ‘Uḍayavar’ to signify that he was thenceforth the Master of all. Such is the attitude of the Lord towards a Prapanna who loves God and whom God loves in return and honours.

Paramātmā begins to show His favour to the Prapanna even from the moment the Prapatti is adopted. The Prapanna becomes one of the chosen few of the Lord and from that time onwards he acquires a status in which he is not bound by the general laws

applicable to the humanity at large. He is not obliged to any other person or deity though his love for them is in no way small. The place where he lives is as good as any other holy place and so he need not go in search of places of pilgrimage, which are often resorted to by people, for dispelling their sins or for earning merits. The Śāstras declare, that there are several sacred cities in Bhāratavarṣa. Some of them are known as Svayamvyakta, because Bhagavān has manifested Himself in those places out of His own accord. Other holy places known as Daiva, Saiddha and Mānuṣa are those where the idols of Bhagavān, have been consecrated and installed respectively by gods. Perfected Beings and ordinary men. If these holy places have the Maṅgalāsāsanam or the devotional worship of Ālvārs also, they are considered specially sacred and worthy of the respect and worship of all.

The Purāṇas declare that the following seven cities viz. Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Māyā, Kāśī, Kāncī and Avantikā, are Muktiṣhetras; that is, the parting from life in those sacred cities will help a person attain Mukti or Salvation. It means that men who could not realize Bhagavān formerly owing to their addiction to pleasures which are not opposed to Śāstras will attain purity of mind in their last days which will ultimately lead them to Mokṣa. This should not be taken to mean that those who are inimical to Bhagavān will attain Salvation if they die in such holy places. On the other hand if a person resides in a holy place and does things that are displeasing to the Lord, he courts his own ruin. For a sin committed in a holy place is more condemnable than that done in an ordinary place. That is why we come across statements like the following in the Śāstras: "One should live in a place consecrated to Viṣṇu doing something which will be in consonance with the dictates of the Śāstras. If a person cannot do that, he should reside in such places at least without committing any sinful act."

If a Prapanna lives in an insignificant place due to his inability to live in a holy city, he does not become less meritorious because of that. On the contrary that small place gains importance as it becomes sanctified by his presence and is treated as a place of pilgrimage to all, including Bhaktas. The episode of Śāndilī illustrates this point very well. Śāndilī was a great devotee of God and she was living in a desolated island in the sea. Once Garuḍa happened to go there. When he saw her he began to think why she

should live in such an insignificant place instead of choosing some sacred place. Owing to this offensive thought his wings were burnt away and he got them back only after obtaining her pardon. This shows that the Bhakta can live anywhere he likes. But residence in holy cities like Śrīraṅga, Śrī Venkaṇṭāḍri and Kanchi is also suggested, because it is conducive to the development of Sattva guṇa in men and offers opportunities to do service to the Lord and come across Bhaktas who come there for worship. The Bhaktas purify others by their mere sight whereas the worship of the consecrated images of Gods and the baths in holy rivers will take some time to do it.

Such is the superior status vouchsafed to a Prapanna by the Lord who has a partiality for him. About this greatness of the Prapanna Śrī Deśika sings as follows:

*Yatraikāgryam bhavati bhagavat-pāda-sevārchanaḍeḥ  
Yatraikāntavyavasita-dhiyo yasya kasyāpi lābhah,  
Vāsthānam tad-īha kritinām bhāti vaikunṭhakalpam  
Prāyo deśa munibhiruditāḥ prāyikaucityavantaḥ.*

### 29. Prapanna, the Paramaikānti

A person who seeks Release or Mokṣa is called a Mumukṣu. Mokṣa is the highest goal and it can be granted only by the Highest Divinity, viz., Śrīman Nārāyaṇa; and the means for it is Bhakti-yoga or Prapatti. Those who are incompetent to do the former resort to the latter. A seeker after Release, who adopts Prapatti or Self-surrender at the feet of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is called the Prapanna. He has no craving for the enjoyment of objects here (aiśvarya) or of Svarga beyond, or even of Kaivalya, the great joy of Self-realization. So he has nothing to do with those means which will yield those fruits, nor with the beings, human or divine, who will bestow them. He does not worship them and does not seek their help either. But he does not entertain any hatred or dislike for them; because they are also parts or bodies (śarīra) of Paramātmā who is the Supreme Soul and to whose worship and service he is exclusively devoted.

This service the Prapanna renders because of the love caused in him by the enjoyment of Paramātmā, which proceeds from the

meditation on His auspicious form (Divya-maṅgala-vigraha), from the reading of the Purāṇas narrating His sportive anecdotes or from the singing of His names which proclaim the auspicious qualities in Him. Though service is not mandatory, as it is caused by overflowing love, it cannot be done arbitrarily, but will have to be done, as long as he is in the world, in conformity with the Śāstras. Service is that which pleases the master; and what will please the Universal Master, Paramātmā, and what will displease Him can be known only from the Śāstras which reveal Him. So all the acts of the Prapanna will be controlled by the dictates of the Śāstras. If a person transgresses the Śāstras, he commits a sin and will be punished for it. If a Prapanna observes the Śāstras, it is not so much to avert punishment as it is to avoid doing anything which will displease the Lord. For to a Prapanna there is no greater hell than the displeasure of the Lord. So he observes, like any other person in the world, the rites and duties prescribed for him in accordance with his caste (varṇa) or stage in life (Āśrama). But he practises them, not as a means for an end or as an accessory to some means, but as an end by itself, whereas others follow them to attain some goal. The only object of the Prapanna is the pleasure and satisfaction of the Lord.

Here a doubt may arise: the Prapanna is a Paramaikāntī who is exclusively devoted to Paramātmā. If he has to observe the daily rites like Sandhyāvandana, prescribed for all people, he will have to repeat the Mantras pertaining to those rites. Those mantras contain the names of gods, like Sūrya, Agni and Indra. Others may use those Mantras as they adore those gods and expect fruits for them. But the Prapanna has no love for any fruit other than Mokṣa and so has no need to worship those gods who give them. If that is the status of a Prapanna how can he repeat those Mantras which will make him a worshipper of those gods? It will be appropriate if he uses Mantras having the names only of Bhagavān even as the sages in Śveta Dvīpa are said to do. Their mantras contain only names like Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva. So it will not be possible for the Prapanna to practise the daily rites having the names of other deities.

This doubt is cleared by the omniscient Vyāsa and other sages and by our Ācāryas like Śrī Rāmānuja and Śrī Vedānta Deśika in the following manner. Though the words, Sūrya and the like, are

taken by ordinary people to refer to the gods bearing those names, they really connote the Paramātmā, Who is the Inner Soul of all gods that constitute his bodies (śarīra). This is based on the Śāstraic doctrine that the meaning of words, denoting the bodies, does not stop with them, but extends, to the souls that inhere in them. For instance, in the statement, 'the man knows', the word 'man' denotes the body of the human being; but 'knowing', which is the act of a sentient being, is predicated about it. The body, being non-sentient, cannot do it. So we have to conclude that the word 'man' should refer to the Ātmā that does the 'knowing'. This leads us to the unavoidable conclusion that the meaning of a word denoting the body does not stop with it, but extends to the Ātmā within. Similarly the word that denotes the Ātmā or the Individual Soul extends further to Paramātmā, the Supreme Soul, that inheres in all things, sentient and non-sentient. This explains the significance of the statements in the Śāstras like: Paramātmā is the object of connotation of all words 'sarva-śabda-vācya'; Paramātmā is the recipient of the worship done to all beings who stand as bodies to him. This is very much like the soul of the king that is pleased when the servants place a garland upon the robes of his body. Thus all offerings, though apparently given to the several gods, go to Paramātmā, who is propitiated by them. Therefore the words Sūrya, Agni, Indra and the like in the Mantras refer to the respective gods at first and ultimately connote Paramātmā, the Supreme Soul, Who is the recipient of all worship as well as the dispenser of the fruits thereof.

There is another way of interpretation which shows that Sūrya, Agni and other words connote Paramātmā directly and not through those gods as stated above. This is based on the principle of etymology. The word 'Sūrya' is derived from the root sū which means 'to give birth to' or 'create'. As Paramātmā is the Supreme Creator of all Universe. He alone is connoted by the term 'Sūrya'. Similarly 'Agni' means 'leader'—from 'agram nayati'—leads ahead. That will connote Paramātmā Who again is the Universal leader and guide. The term 'Indra' is derived from the root 'idi' meaning 'possessed of wealth' and in its full significance, will connote Paramātmā who possesses unsurpassed wealth. Therefore, it is stated with full justification that when a Prapanna repeats the names of Sūrya, Agni, Indra and the like, in the course of the observance of his daily rites like Sandhyāvandana, he

worships only the Paramātmā. and not the minor deities from whom he does not expect anything.

Here crops up a question: according to this interpretation all the names of gods will connote only the Paramātmā. If that is so, the Paramaikāntī may as well take to the worship of other gods also, and it cannot be objected that the exclusive devotion of the Paramaikāntī to the Paramātmā will be affected by it. 'It is not so'—we say. This method of the etymological interpretation of names of gods can be resorted to only with reference to those Mantras which are connected with the obligatory rites (Nitya and Naimittika Karma) of a Prapanna. As they are obligatory, they cannot be abandoned. If they are abandoned, they will bring demerit and punishment. In the course of the observance of such rites, if there are names of Śūrya, Agni and Indra, they will have to be chanted and cannot be avoided. In such cases, those terms can be taken to connote Paramātmā in one of the two ways stated above—either etymologically or as His being the Inner Soul of those gods. But rites, which are optional (Kāmya) and therefore not obligatory, need not be practised by a Prapanna and their non-observance will not bring demerit or punishment. In spite of it, if the Prapanna practises them, it is not because the Śāstras lay them down as compulsory, but out of his own free will. Practice of such optional rites having the names of other gods is adopted to by his own will and therefore it will not be in consonance with his status as a Paramaikāntī. Normally he will not take to the worship of other gods. If he does, it means that his exclusive devotion to Paramātmā is not yet ripe. But the Lord out of His Grace, will make it grow and become perfect and thus make him a full-fledged Paramaikāntī. Such is the relationship between the two that He holds the Prapanna dearer to Him than His own Ātmā.

### 30. *Prapanna and Paramātmā: Their relationship*

One of the fundamental doctrines of Viśiṣṭādvaita is the body-soul-relationship (Śarīra-Ātma-bhāva sambandha) between the Jīva and Paramātmā. Nārāyaṇa is the kinsman to the Jīva in every form—mother, father, brother, residence, means, friend and the goal. Bhaktas and Prapannas—i.e., those who are practising Bhaktiyoga and those who have adopted Prapatti—are more than this to Him, for they are His very soul—Ātmā.



Prapanna's relationship is still more intimate. Because of his unique qualification, viz, incompetence and destitution, he becomes dearer to God than all others who have the wherewithal to take to some means of attainment or other. Paramātmā takes to him with greater love and sympathy even as a mother is much more attached to an invalid child than to her other children. Śrī Deśika sings about Bhagavān's Karuṇā in Dayāśataka as follows:

*Manye mātā jada iva sute vatsalā māḍrise tvam.*

[Methinks, like the mother towards her dull-witted son, Thou art affectionate to me.]

Apart from the fact that the Prapanna is the object of the Mercy of Paramātmā, he also merits the love of Paramātmā. His love for Paramātmā is unparalleled and indescribable and the latter also loves him in the same manner and measure. The Purāṇas state that the Jivas, in general, are related to Paramātmā in several ways. They are the servants of God, who is the Master of the Universe. They are, again, the sons of God, who is the Universal Father. The Divyaprabandhas sing of a relationship which is unique and sublime. Here the Jivātmā is not merely a servant or a son, but much more than that—the eternal bride who joins in wedlock the Puruṣottama. The Ālvārs are themselves the bride, even as Āṇḍal is, and they pour in eloquent songs their own experiences of joy in union with Him and pangs of separation from Him and also about their mutual love. In Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, the adoption of Prapatti or the Doctrine of Self-surrender by a person is not a mere philosophical concept or a religious ritual, but the celebration of a marriage between the Jivātmā and Paramātmā. Śrī Deśika has beautifully portrayed this wedding in one of his Stotras, *Śaraṇāgati-Dīpikā* by name. Jīva is the Eternal Bride and Paramātmā the Eternal Bridegroom. Just as Sītā was given in marriage to Śrī Rāma by Janaka, this princess is given in holy wedlock to Paramātmā, the King of Kings of the Universe. He accepts her with love and pride and draws her near. Even as the bride cherishes the Māṅgalya-Sūtra the auspicious thread of wedlock placed round her neck by the bridegroom—and takes special care of it, the Jīva, here Prapanna, takes special care of the bond of service. He cherishes and keeps it fresh by selfless and unimpeded service to the Lord in this world in the company of the

chosen few as a prelude to the enjoyment of Infinite Bliss which develops into the eternal service to the Lord in the company of the Ever-Free Souls in Sri Vaikuṇṭha. Thus the life of a Prapanna is like that of a chaste and loving wife, for whom her husband is everything and service to him born out of love is the only end in life.

Here is the Śloka (30):

*Dattāḥ prajā janakavat tava deśikendraiaḥ  
 Patyā abhinandya bhavatā parinīyamānāḥ,  
 Madhye satām mahitabhogaviśeṣasiddhīyai  
 Māṅgalyasūtram iva bibhrati kiṅkaratvam*

[The Jīvas, who are given to Thee by the great Ācāryas—like daughters by fathers or Janaka—are, with rejoice, married by Thee, the husband; and they value service, in the company of great men, to Thee, as the auspicious thread of wedlock, for attaining the esteemed bliss (of wedded life).]

There is yet another way in which the Prapanna is related, to Paramātmā, the Universal Sovereign. He has the status of a Crown Prince. This installation here of the Prapanna as a Crown-Prince is preliminary to the conferment of the Sovereignty of Service that is to come off later in the world beyond —Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. Naturally the Prapanna has to conduct himself in a proper way so that he may maintain the status and dignity of a prince. He takes special care to avoid all things that will be contrary to the will of the Lord.

It is true that the Prapanna will not be deposed from his position as a Crown-Prince though he breaks the laws laid down by the Universal Sovereign, who, for him now is a loving father. It is also true that the Prapanna will not be visited with severe punishment, as others will be because of his status as a Prince. Even for the worst of sins, punishment will be restricted to some light suffering in this world; and in any case there is no fear of hell for him. It may be a light punishment as is the case with princes in this world when they happen to commit offences. But the Prapanna is of such superior mettle that he will not like even this. The fact is that there is no greater Hell for a Prapanna than the displeasure of Paramātmā and so normally he will not do anything

that will displease Him. If he commits sins impelled by previous sins that have begun to operate, he will immediately repent and make amends for them. If, by chance, he is of a tough nature and does not expiate for them, the Lord gives him a light punishment and purifies him of his sins. When once the Prapatti has been performed and protection has been promised, Paramātmā will never go back upon His word of protection even if the Prapanna errs. The Prapanna will be absolved of all his sins and rendered pure so that, when he shoves the body and soars high, he will have a glorious journey on the way and a royal welcome at the end.

Here is a beautiful pen-picture of the spotless life of the Prapanna the Crown-Prince, given by Śrī Deśika in a sloka:

*Divye pade dayita-kiṅkaratādhirajyam  
Dātum tvayaiva dayayā vihitābhīsekāḥ  
Ādehapātam anaghāḥ paricaryayā te  
Yuñjānachintya! yuvarājapadam bhajante*

—Śaraṇagati Dīpikā.

[O Lord! The object of meditation for the Yogins! The Prapannas have been installed as Crown-Prince by Thee out of Mercy with a view to confer on them, later in the World of Divinity, the sovereignty of service to the loving Lord. And they too lead a flawless life of service to Thee here and till the body falls, enjoy the status of a Prince.]

### 31. *The Absolution of Sins*

Paramātmā, out of His innate Love, is waiting from time immemorial for some gesture on the part of the Jīva as a means to extend His hand of protection to him. When the Jīva entertains some faith in the Paramātmā and surrenders the burden of protection in His hands, the latter eagerly accepts him. By the performance of Prapatti the Jivātmā has done his part of the duty as a supplicant. Now it is the turn of the Paramātmā as the Protector to act. So He busies Himself to take steps for the redemption of the Prapanna, who has become His ward.

All the sins that have been committed by him in previous births from beginningless time (Pūrva-pāpa) are taken away from

him by Paramātmā and he is no longer obliged to experience their fruit. In the case of the person who adopts Bhaktiyoga, all the previous sins are removed from him—all expecting that part which has begun to operate and yield its fruit (known as *Prārabdha-karma*), as a result of which sin he has taken birth and which he will have to exhaust by experience in this and succeeding births. So some delay is inevitable in the attainment of Mokṣa by him—the delay depending upon the nature of the operating Karma.

But it is different in the case of the other person, who adopts the means known as Prapatti. Prapatti has got the power to destroy even the *Prārabdha-karma*—the sin that has begun to yield its fruit. If prayed for, Bhagavān is ready to do away with the entire *Prārabdha-karma* and confer Mokṣa on the Prapanna even the next moment. If the Prapanna chooses to experience that part of the Karma which has given this body and wants that only all the other part of it must be wiped out, Paramātmā agrees, though a bit unwillingly; for the latter wants to confer the greatest Bliss on His devotee at once. So the choice of fixing the time for Mokṣa lies with the seeker, Prapanna, and not with the giver, Paramātmā.

It may be asked why the Prapanna, who is a great devotee of the Lord, chooses to continue in this world which is not a place of unmixed joy. The reason is—he is actuated by some noble desires, namely the enjoyment of the Arcā forms—consecrated idols of God—in the various Divyadeśas or the enjoyment of the company of Bhāgavatas or the rendering of service to Bhagavān and His devotees, all of which is but a foretaste here of the Bliss that he is going to enjoy in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. But so long as a man is in this world, he cannot avoid the sufferings due to thirst and hunger, disease and agony, incidental to the continuance of the body.

A Prapanna will not ordinarily commit a sin because of his love and affection for his master, Bhagavān, whom he will not like to offend. But by the effect of the previous Karmas, some sins may occur. Bhagavān too, out of His love for the Prapanna, is ready to excuse some of the sins committed by him in the post-Prapatti period. Pardonable are the sins committed by the Prapanna in ignorance or by force of circumstances beyond his control. They are forgiven and do not stick to him. But if he commits sins deliberately and not by compulsion, he is answerable and must

pay for them, though he is a favourite of the Lord. But if he repents and makes atonement for them either by a *Prāyaścitta* or by another *Prapatti* for this purpose, *Paramātmā* forgives him. If he is tough by nature and does not expiate for them, *Bhagavān* gives him a light punishment even as a king does to his favourite prince when he commits an offence. This again shows the merciful nature of the Lord. This much for the sins.

And now to the *Puṇya* or the virtuous acts. As far as the *Prapanna* is concerned, a *Puṇya* is as much an evil as a sin. For if the sin takes him away from the *Mokṣa* to undergo suffering in Hell, the *Puṇya* takes him to *Svarga* to enjoy happiness there. This also puts off the Bliss of *Mokṣa*. In being a hindrance to Bliss, both *Puṇya* and *Pāpa* are alike. Hence it is that *Puṇya* is described as golden fetters and *Pāpa* as iron fetters. Whether they are made of gold or iron, fetters deprive a man of freedom of movement. So, if there is *Puṇya* standing to the credit of a *Prapanna*, they have also to be done away with. All the *Puṇyas* of the previous births and those of the pre-*prapatti* period in this birth are taken away en bloc from him to be transferred to his benefactors. In the post-*prapatti* period also he might have done some *Puṇyas*. They may be of two kinds—those that were done with a desire for fruit and those that were done without attachment for the fruit, but purely as service to *Bhagavān* to please Him. In respect of the latter, the fruit is achieved at once as *Bhagavān* is pleased with them and there is nothing more to be enjoyed. In respect of the other kind of *Puṇya*, viz., those that are associated with a fruit,—a *Prapanna*, who is perfect, will not do it. If he has done, he must be ready to reap the fruit. That fruit again may be of two kinds, one that will be in accordance with his position as a *śeṣa* and a *Paramaikāntin*, and the other that is against it. The fruit of the former category is bestowed on him by *Bhagavān* even in this life itself by which he is able to have greater enjoyment of *Bhagavān* and do greater service to Him. If it is against his nature as *Paramaikānti*, as for instance enjoyment of happiness in *Svarga*, he cannot be given that; for after the fall of this body the *Prapanna* does not go to *Svarga* even as he does not go to *Naraka*, since his goal is *Śrī Vaikuṇṭha*. The *Puṇya* belonging to this variety is to be set apart to be disposed of later.

Here a doubt may arise: the *śāstras* declare that any act, virtuous or otherwise (*Puṇya* or *Pāpa*) will have its effect and the

fruit of that act must inevitably be experienced. If the act is virtuous, he gets happiness. If it is sinful, he gets punishment, unless he makes atonement for it by Prāyaścitta and the like. This is the general rule. But if a person does a Puṇya without a desire for the fruit and dedicates it to the Lord, he does not get the fruit and thereby he avoids going to the Svarga and the like. But the Lord, in His generosity bestows, in lieu of the specific fruit of that act, greater knowledge and more service. If such be the case, one may as well commit a sin and dedicate it to the Lord and say he does not want the fruit and thereby try to escape punishment. The two are not identical. Puṇya is what is ordained by the Śāstras and its performance will please the Lord. Even if the doer does not want the specific fruit, say Svarga, he will get the pleasure of the Lord, the Universal Ruler. The case of Pāpa or sin is different. As it is the violation of the rules of the Śāstras, it will cause displeasure to Paramātmā whose orders the Śāstras are. The displeasure will result in punishment. After doing an act which will invite punishment, how can one escape it? Either one must receive the punishment or make amends for the sin and thus avert the punishment by pleasing the Lord. When the Lord is pleased, his displeasure disappears and with it the consequent punishment. So one cannot break the law and dedicate it to the Lord. It is not left to the choice of a man to accept or not the result of an evil act whereas a man may do a virtuous act and have no desire for its fruit. A Prapanna keeps away from a sin not so much to avert the Hell, as to avoid incurring the Lord's displeasure. For to him there is no greater Hell than the displeasure of the Lord. Therefore so long as he lives in this world he leads a faultless life full of devotion and service to the Lord.

The Prapanna is now a unique individual. He is in the world, but not of it. Like a bachelor who is eagerly awaiting the day of his marriage, the Prapanna is eagerly expecting the day when he will shed this body and set out on the Shining Path.

### 32. *The Day of Expectations*

In order to attain Mokṣa, the Mumukṣu or Seeker after Release has adopted the proper means. For the destruction of the previous sins, he has done some atonement or other in the form of

**Prapatti and the like.** He leads a faultless life and follows such occupations as are consistent with his exclusive and supreme attachment to the Lord. His thought, word and deed, all are God-centred and worldly pleasures no longer tempt him. He feels at home in the company of lovers of God (Bhāgavatas) and uneasy in that of the worldly-minded. He enjoys the qualities and forms of Arcāvatāra—consecrated idols of the Lord. But the joy he gets by that is quite in disproportion to the longing he has for the full and perfect enjoyment of the Lord. He is like a man who is thrown in an ocean of milk with his mouth tied. He melts away pining for union with the Lord like a piece of wax placed not far away from fire. Even a moment of separation is unbearable and looks long like an age of darkness to him. He spends sleepless nights and days. The name of God is ever on his lips even as the thought of God is in his mind. He beseeches and importunes the Lord to release him from the world of bondage and distress. The Lord is also eager to confer Paramapada on the Prapanna; but He does not do it as the Prapanna at the time of the adoption of Prapatti chose to remain here till the fall of this body. In the meanwhile the Lord keeps him in the world in a place of his own liking where he is held in as high esteem as an anointed queen.

When the long-expected moment arrives, the Lord, with great ardour and enthusiasm, busies Himself and makes arrangements for the departure of the soul of the Prapanna from this world as well as for the glorious welcome on the way. On the day on which the Prapanna adopted Prapatti, all his previous Karmas—Pūnyas and Pāpas—awaiting to yield their fruits, as well as the Karma which has begun to operate, except that portion of which he has agreed to expiate during his life, had been cut off from him without any trace being left. As the last moment draws near, Karmas, taken away from him and kept aside, are disposed of by the Paramātmā. All his Pūnyas or meritorious deeds are divided and distributed to those who were the well-wishers and benefactors of the Prapanna during his sojourn in the post-prapatti period in this world; and his sins are transferred to those that did him harm. The action of the Lord, in transferring the Pūnya or Pāpa of one to another, cannot be said to be arbitrary or capricious. For the Pūnyas are given to his friends in return for the good done to the Prapanna and Pāpa to his enemies as a consequence of the evils wrought by them. It may be asked why the Lord postponed

this disposal to the last moment of the life of the Prapanna. That is because the Lord wants to give opportunities to those who did harm to Prapanna to repent and correct themselves and to give opportunities to his well-wishers to love and honour the Prapanna more and more. That is why our Ācāryas and Ālvārs advise us to love and serve the lovers of God (Bhāgavatas) and warn us against offending them.

Now all the Karmas of the Prapanna have been disposed of by the Lord; and the accepted portion of the Prārabdha Karma also has been exhausted by experience by the Prapanna. There is nothing to keep him bound to this world any longer. He is ready to shed the last vestige of his existence and set out on the last journey. Any moment or any day is auspicious for his departure and so he need not wait for the approach of an auspicious time to depart. It is true some Śāstras say that day-time, bright half of the month, Uttarāyaṇa and the like are favourable times for those that die. But such statements apply only to those who are desirous of benefits other than Mokṣa and who have not completely fulfilled the Upāya. So there is no restriction for the Prapanna in regard to the time or manner of his death.

The final remembrance (Antima-smṛti) of God is a *sine qua non* for the attainment of God. The Lord has taken upon Himself the entire burden of the redemption of the Prapanna and so He makes the latter remember Him at the last moments without effort of his own. Antima-smṛti is the name given to the remembrance of the Lord at that time when the activities of the external sense-organs have come to an end and the mind alone—the internal organ—is working. The Śāstras declare that the nature of the birth of a person after death depends upon the object remembered at the last moment of his life. That is, whatever form the man thinks at that time, that will be the form he takes in the next birth. The story of Sage Bharata, known as Jaḍa Bharata, is an illustration on the point. Bharata had taken upon himself the duty of bringing up a fawn whose mother died immediately after its birth; and what was first pity became love and then it grew day by day. In his last moments the faithful deer was standing beside him with tears in its eyes and Sage Bharata gave up his body thinking of the deer. Consequently in the next birth he was a deer. So it is stated that a person who wants to attain God must think of



God in his last moments. This final remembrance is prescribed as a necessary accessory (anga) in the case of those who practise Bhaktiyoga. Therefore they have to train themselves by taking efforts every day to think of God so that in the last moments also they may be able to think of God.

In the case of the Prapanna, the final remembrance of God need not be effected by his own efforts, but the Lord makes the Prapanna think of Him. People who are standing near cannot know what passes in the mind at that time as there are no external symptoms by which they can know it since all the external senses have ceased to function. That there is this final remembrance will be known only to the Lord who confers the Mokṣa and to the Jīva who is to become the Mukta.

As the time of departure draws near, the Lord causes some incident or other suited to the time for the soul's parting from the body. First, He joins the ten external sense-organs (Bahir-indriyas-five of sense and five of action) to the mind and then makes all the eleven merge into the vital breath or Prāṇa. All these are merged into the Jīva. Then takes place a process of the churning of the vertebra in the gross body out of which the subtle body is extracted and joined to the Jīva. The process is a source of great suffering to the Jīva who almost becomes unconscious. Paramātmā, who is the Friend and Well-wisher, keeps the Jīva by the side of Himself in the form He has assumed in the heart to give him comfort by His nectareous touch. By this the Jīva gets rest and relaxation and is now ready to pass out of the body. The process to this extent is the same both for the man who has realized the Lord by Bhaktiyoga and the man who has not.

The nādis' or the blood-vessels are the passages through which the Jīva emerges from the body. There are innumerable blood-vessels of diverse colours to the Jīva, who, like a lamp, resides in the heart. Among these there is one in the middle which goes upwards. The Jīva, who passes through this vein breaks through the disc of the sun, and having passed beyond the world of Brahmā, reaches the highest state. One hundred other veins also go upwards. The Jīva, who goes out through them, attains the bodies of gods and reaches their worlds. Some blood-vessels go downwards and they are dim. The Jīva, passing through them, is

born in saṁsāra in this world without any choice on his part, in order to experience the fruits of his karmas.

The Jīva, who attains salvation, must find his way out through the particular blood-vessel known as the Suṣumnā, 1 Brahmanāḍi or Mūrdhanyanāḍi. It is not difficult for the soul of a Prapanna to find it, since the Lord, who is in the heart, (Hārda) makes its edges radiant at that time. Thus the entry to the Brahmanāḍi is lighted. Then the Jīva goes out of the heart, which is compared to a hanging lotus-bud, a plaintain-flower or a breast, through this blood-vessel which is above the hundredth to the head. Then he passes through a subtle hole in the head known as Brahmarandhra which is like the main-gate to this city of Brahman, viz., the human body with eleven gates. Thus the Lord helps the Jīva to enter into the Mūrdhanyanāḍi and set out with the support of the rays of the Sun in the Shining Path, called Archirāḍi. Thenceforward it is a never ending day of perfect light and luminosity to the Jīva who is referred to as Mukta.

Now the Ātmā of the Prapanna is on the Shining Path.

### 33. *On the Shining Path—Arcirādimārga*

The Jīva was in bondage as a result of his Karmas from beginningless time and the body was the prison in which he was languishing. Since he adopted Prapatti, his fetters of gold and iron—Puṇya and Pāpa — were cut and he has been set free. As the last moment draws near, the Lord, who abides in his heart having subtle form (Hārda), takes the Jīva in his arms and moves proudly through the Mūrdhanyanāḍi— the blood-vessel which goes from the heart to the head. There is a hole on the head known as Brahmarandhra which is like the main gate to the body, the City of God—Brahmapura. As the Jīva emerges through the Brahmarandhra in the embrace of the Lord, he is welcomed by gods who are waiting to greet him with offerings and tributes.

All these ages from time immemorial, the Jīva was an eternal debtor to these gods; and birth after birth he was trying to discharge the debt by means of sacrifices and by means of the daily rituals. But all he gave was hardly able to clear the interest for the

debt; and therefore the original debt stood as before. By the adoption of the Prapatti, all that debt has been duly discharged and he does not owe the gods anything. More than that he has become a favourite of the Lord. So the gods now stand before the Jīva with all respect and fear, and honour him with offerings. The Jīva moves on conferring on them a gracious look of satisfaction and approbation. The gods also feel honoured by it.

As the Jīva emerges through the Brahmarandhra and soars high towards Śrī Vaikuṇṭha, the Guiding Angels, called Ātivāhikas, who are to escort him through the journey, come to him one after another to do their duty. First comes the Ātivāhika—Archis or Fire, by name. He receives the Jīva and honours him by placing before him all his wealth. He escorts the Jīva in the Shining Path up to the limit of his own jurisdiction. There the Angel named Ahas or Day-light is ready to receive and take charge. He welcomes the Jīva and offers his tributes. Then he follows him up to the next stage where the Angel, Śukla-pakṣa or the Bright Fortnight is waiting to receive him. The latter escorts the Jīva through his own zone and hands him over to another Ātivāhika, Uttarāyana, by name, who greets him with all honour and follows him to the end of his own dominion. There the Guiding Angel, Samvatsara or Year receives the Jīva and escorts him further.

Ahas (Day-light), Sukla-pakṣa (Bright fortnight), Uttarāyana (Summer Solstice) and Samvatsara (Year) are all names of periods of time. But here they refer to deities presiding over them. Who are these deities? Some are of opinion that they are gods who have come to occupy the respective posts of duty as a result of their meritorious acts. Others hold that they are really the Eternally Free Souls or Nitya-sūris, who have been appointed to the several posts to welcome and honour the Jīva as he emerges from the body and marches gloriously along the Shining Path in the warm embrace of the Lord, like a prince in the company of a Ruling monarch.

As the Jīva proceeds further, the Deity Vāyu comes forward to receive him—Vāyu, who also goes by the name of Vāyu-loka and Deva-loka because of his being the abode of gods. From there the Jīva passes through a small hole like that of the hub of a chariot's wheel and reaches the Sun. There is a small hole in the

solar orb which is similar to the hole of the Āḍambara, a musical drum. Escorted by the Sun God, the Jīva goes through it to the region of the Moon, who receives him with all honours. Here again the escorting Sun and Moon are not the ordinary Sun and Moon of the material world, but are Escorting Angels who preside over them.

From there the Jīva goes further up passing through a hole of the size of a kettle-drum (Dṇḍubhi). Then the Deity of Vidyut or Lightning comes to receive and take him. This Vidyut is referred to by different names in different Upaniṣads. He is known as Vaidyuta in one, Mānasa in another, and Amānava in yet another. From the time he takes charge of the Jīva, Amānava accompanies him throughout the last lap of this journey till the Jīva attains Brahman.

This glorious Path, which is taken by the Jīva in the company of the Lord, and in which he is welcomed and honoured by several deities in turn, is known as Arcirāḍi Gati or the Shining Path. A knowledge of this path is considered necessary for those who practise Bhaktiyoga; for meditation on it every day is prescribed as an accessory for Bhakti-yōga till the last day of its completion. Those who go by this path will surely attain Salvation and there is no rebirth for them in this world.

Normally all Jīvas attaining Salvation go by this path; but there are some cases of exception also. Some persons practise a kind of Bhaktiyoga at the completion of which they leave the body and go to the world of Brahmā—the four-faced Creator. There they abide in his body and enjoy his happiness along with him. At the end of the life of that Brahmā, they emerge from his body, and from his world—Satyloka—cross the Brahmāṇḍa and proceed to Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. They have not to traverse the earlier part of the Arcirāḍi Gati as they are beyond it already. The case of a Puṇḍarika, Siśupāla, the inhabitants of Ayodhyā and the like comes under a special class as they attained Salvation straightaway even without going through the Shining Path.

Cāndogya Upaniṣad, Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad and the Purāṇas are the authorities from which we come to know of this Shining Path. This is the Shining Path in one Brahmāṇḍa and every

brahmāṇḍa has one such Path. There are innumerable Brahmāṇḍas, all of them hanging in clusters from every one of the hairs on the body (cosmic form) of the Virāṭ Puruṣa like bunches of fig-fruits in the twigs of the fig tree. Ordinary beings cannot know, much less see, the other Brahmāṇḍas, but Sages, who have acquired superior vision by means of penance and who are therefore omniscient, are able to see every one of them and communicate to us in the Purāṇas their experiences.

Śrī Vedānta Deśika states that there is a particular Upaniṣad which declares that the Jīva, who is to attain Salvation, takes to this Shining Path and traverses first through all the worlds within a Brahmāṇḍa. He breaks through the outer shell of the Brahmāṇḍa and passes through the seven enclosures, each outer one being ten times wider than the inner one. Finally he gets beyond the Tamas-Tattva which envelops all these Brahmāṇḍas and reaches the Virajā, the River of Nectar which is flowing at all times perennially like the perennial stream of the Lord's Grace. He crosses it by his mind and lands in the Nitya-Vibhūti or the Divine World of Eternal Splendour.

### 34. In the World of Eternal Splendour (Nitya-Vibhūti)

The Lord out of His innate grace and spontaneous love helps the Jīva at every stage from the time of Creation. But the Jīva does not take advantage of this grace because of his propensities for committing sins, which have become, as it were, a second nature to him. When he repents and responds, the Lord's grace begins to flow unceasingly. Now a new chapter begins in the Jīva's life. He seeks an Ācārya, acquires knowledge, and adopts the Prapatti. Thereafter he leads a pure and faultless life dedicated to the service of the Lord. When the last moment of his life arrives and when the Jīva has to abandon his body, the Lord takes complete charge of him. He emerges with the Jīva from the body as a king would walk about with his charming child in his arms. Now the Jīva is in the Shining Path—Ārcirādi Gati, that leads him to Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. Those who go by this path will not have rebirth in the Saṁsāra. Since birth in this world is for experiencing the fruits of the Puṇya and Pāpakarma, and since all the Karmas of the Jīva have been annihilated by Prapatti and other means, the Jīva has

not got to take birth in this world. But he may come here out of his own free will even as the Nityasūris do in the form of Ālvārs and Ācāryas. The purpose of the visit is service to God when He comes down to redeem the souls in bondage.

As the Jīva goes along this Shining Path, he traverses all the worlds in the higher regions of the Universe. Finally he breaks through the shell that envelops the Brahmāṇḍa, or the Egglike Universe, and reaches the Stream Virajā or the Unsullied which divides the material World (Līlā Vibhūti) from the World of Eternal Splendour (Nitya Vibhūti) and which is flowing perennially even like the Grace of the Lord. He plunges into the waters of the Virajā which are pellucid and sweet, fragrant and cool. At once all his fatigue vanishes—fatigue, which is the result of his wandering in the meandering path of the material Universe from beginningless time. Since the touch of the Amānava, who has been escorting him, has already made him pure, he now emerges doubly pure and refreshed. The subtle body, which is the last vestige of the material World and which was kept on merely for the sake of the journey, is now cast off like a boat that is set adrift after crossing the river. The Jīva, by his mere will, crosses the Virajā and lands in the Nitya-Vibhūti or the World of Eternal Splendour.

Nitya-Vibhūti is Śrī Vaikuṇṭha, the Land of Infinite Glory and Bliss. It is the object of the constant vision of the Nityasūris or Eternal Angels and the supreme goal of attainment of those who are exclusively devoted to the Lord, the Paramaikāntins. It is composed of a super-sensuous substance known as Śuddhasattva which is infinitely superior to the matter of this Earth. Our Earth is made up of Pañcabhūtas or the Five Elements, whereas Nitya-Vibhūti comprises Pañca-śaktis or Five Divine Substances which are described by the Pañchopaniṣad-mantras. Śuddha-sattva possesses a Bliss which is unmixed with sorrow and unsurpassed in excellence and is beyond the thought and word of even the Yogins or Realized Souls, not to speak of ordinary mortals. Though the Time element exists there, it exercises no influence over it, but is useful only in showing an action as taking place prior to, or later than, another, or a Mukta having arrived there before or after another. That world possesses a lustre which is natural to it and which would surpass the luminosity of hundreds of thousands of suns and moons. When the Jīva attains that World where the Lord

reigns supreme, he attains the status of having *Sālokya*—the proud privilege of being in the same world as the Lord. He becomes endowed with a body which is composed of *Śuddha-sattva*—a substance that is entirely different from the ordinary matter or *Prakṛti*. His body is very much like that of the Lord. Therefore he is said to be possessed of the Bliss of *Sārūpya* to the Lord—having a body similar to the Lord's.

Now the *Jīva* has become the *Mukta* or the Freed Soul. He moves into *Srī Vaikuṇṭha*, the Super-sensuous World of unalloyed Bliss—the world, which was the object of his longing. All this while he was dreaming about this world as he had learnt about it from the *Bhagavad Śāstras* and from the *Vaikuṇṭha Gadya* of *Śrī Rāmānuja*. He has now a direct and full perception of this Universe with all its glorious attributes and wonderful peculiarities. First he comes across the two Oceans of Nectar, named 'Aram' and 'Nyam' as well as the gardens, mountains, rivers, lakes and the like—all of which are full of unsurpassed Bliss of Divinity. Then the *Mukta* moves towards the Lake of Nectar, *Airamaḍiyam* by name, which looks, as if it were, filled with the flood of happiness in the world of Eternal Bliss. From there he goes near 'Somasavana', as *Aśvattha* Tree, which is like the stationary Incarnation of the Lord, the Oversoul of all. It is waited upon by the *Nityasūris* and looks sublime.

Then there advance towards the *Mukta* five hundred *Apsaras* are Divine Damsels who have been deputed by the Lord of *Vaikuṇṭha* to welcome him. They come from the Immortal city known as 'Aparājita' (or Invincible), which is the capital and head-quarters of the Lord. They are coming in five groups of a hundred each to the accompaniment of the sweet music of bugles and conches. They are holding in their hands garlands, ointment, fragrant powder, raiments and other articles of decoration. They greet him and say: Rule over this Universe; you are the Lord's own. They receive and honour him as the handmaids of a queen would the prince of a reigning monarch. Thereafter they deck him in diverse ways with the decorations of Brahman when he becomes the peer of those that wait on the Lord and serve Him.

Next they lead him to a Tree named *Tilya*, to a building *Sālajya* by name and then to a mansion named *Aparājita*.

The Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, who is Himself the abode of all fragrance, all flavour and all lustre, endows the Mukta with His own divine fragrance, flavour and splendour. Consequently the figure and the qualities of the Mukta become transformed into an amalgam of the fragrance of Prajāpati, the lustre of the Sun, and the sweetness of the Nectar.

Then the Mukta draws near the City of Vaikuṇṭha which excels in Bliss all other worlds of happiness and which is known by different names as 'Ayodhyā' (Impregnable), and 'Aparājitā' (Invincible). The Nityasūris with their heads adorned with crowns come in groups to receive him and conduct him in turns. They honour him as he is the esteemed servant of Govinda in successive generations when he was in the mortal world. They lead him to the huge Tower with high ramparts adorned with flying banners. The Mukta arrives at the portals of the City where two Nityasūris, Indra and Prajāpati by name, keep guard. They come forward, receive him with all honours befitting a king and say: "You are our Masters since you are the Lord's own." He walks through the gates that are ever open to the devotees of the Lord and enters into the city of God.

### 35. *In the City of the Lord*

When the Jivātmā crosses the River Virajā and enters the Kingdom of God, he is known as the Mukta. We saw how the denizens of Śrī Vaikuṇṭha welcome and honour him at every stage in the course of his journey through the kingdom. He arrives at the grand Tower with the portals. Passing through the gate he steps into the broad streets of the City of God. The arrival of one soul in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha from the Saṁsāra is of such cosmic significance that the whole Śrī Vaikuṇṭha is agog to see him, receive him and honour him. The streets have been sprinkled with water and decorated with arches, festoons and banners. The Mukta moves along in glorious procession through the broad streets flanked on either side with palatial mansions which are like gem-set hills. The Eternal Sūris or Angels there whose glories are sung in the Upaniṣads vie with one another in honouring him.

Almost at every other step the Mukta is made to halt by the Angels who pour water over his feet and wash them. They feel



purified and honoured when the Mukta accepts their worship; and they exclaim with joy that it is a piece of their good fortune that the Mukta should deign to come to Śrī Vaikuṇṭha, leaving the mortal world. The reason is that the qualities of the Lord shine in full only on Earth. The men there will have the opportunity to enjoy the qualities to a greater extent—particularly those qualities which come under the head of amiability and accessibility.

As the Mukta proceeds, lovely damsels with moon-like faces come to receive him carrying in their hands glowing lamps and golden pitchers filled with water as a sign of auspiciousness. They also sprinkle on him Scented powder consecrated by having been offered to the Lord. Some bring with them the Pāduka or the sandals of the Lord. The welcome with the Pādukās is the greatest honour that can be shown to a Mukta, for Pādukā is the supreme wealth to him. He bows before the Pādukās and places them on his head with joy. Then he moves and comes to the Divine Maṇḍapa or the Pavilion of the Lord. There the Divine Fame of the Parabrahman flows into him. By this he becomes the equal of the Lord Himself whom the Śāstras describe as being possessed of matchless fame.

Thereafter the Mukta reaches the charming Assembly Hall which goes by the name of 'Prajāpati Sabhā'. It is a beautiful Hall of Bliss having thousand pillars. As all the things of the world are composed of Śuddhasattva, a substance which is pellucid by nature, the pillars are transparent and they do not obstruct the vision of objects on the other side. The Hall is vast and it is never crowded in spite of the presence of multitudes of Nityasūris and Muktas. There are four entrances or 'Dvāras' and there are two Dvārapālakas for each one of them. Caṇḍa and Pracāṇḍa are in the front; Bhadra and Subhadra on the right; Jaya and Vijaya in the back; Dhātā and Vidhātā on the left. There are eight Commanding Officers in the eight corners around the Pavilion, each of them mounted, well-armed and waited upon by a posse of attendants, guarding it. They are 2—Kumuda, Kumudākṣa, Puṇḍarīka, Vāmana, Śaṅkukarṇa, Sarvanetra, Sumukha and Supratīṣṭha. As the Mukta goes towards them, they, with love and respect, receive and admit him.

Viṣvaksena, the Lord's Commander-in-chief now takes charge of the Mukta and his arrival is announced. Several officers

on duty come to wait upon him under the orders of Viṣvaksena and conduct him to the dais. The Mukta is overwhelmed with joy and he can hardly control himself. He bows down and rises at every step out of awe and respect for the Lord to whose presence he is being conducted. As he comes near and mounts the steps in the porch he sees Garuḍa, the Lord's Vehicle, standing before Him with folded hands in all humility. With his wings and body of golden hue, Garuḍa looks like the winged Mount Meru—the Mountain of gold. The peculiar nature of Garuḍa is he can divine the thought of the Lord and act even without the express command of the Master and he flies faster than mind. Garuḍa is said to be of the essence of the three Vedas. His body has such shine that he looks like a mirror placed before the Lord and His Consort. The Mukta prostrates before Garuḍa and with his permission gets into the beautiful Assembly Hall.

There are infinite numbers of Nityasūris and Muktas who are standing in rows lost in the full and perfect enjoyment of the Bliss of the Lord and His qualities. It was the yearning of the Jīva when he was in Saṁsāra to become one of the company of the servants of the Lord enjoying Him. Now those desires of his are realized and he is happy to be in their midst. Some of them engage themselves in the service of the Lord, others in the service of those that serve the Lord, yet others in the enjoyment of the Beautiful form or beatific qualities of the Lord. Not content with this they entertain themselves by trying to establish the superiority of one quality of the Lord over another. Some speak for the superiority of the qualities that go to prove His greatness—qualities like omniscience and omnipotence. Others prefer mercifulness, amiability and the like which make the Lord accessible to all. In the course of the debate they forget themselves so much in the enjoyment that to prove their point they adduce arguments to the contrary. That is said to be the ~~true~~ mark of the enjoyment of Bhagavān. They must begin one thing and stray into another. Others pray for the welfare of the Lord, by singing 'Pallāṇḍu' (Long live the Lord,) or Jitam te (Hail Victory to Thee), or Alleluia (Praise to Thee). Hearing this sound of the songs of praise, Ādiśeṣa, the Serpent-couch of the Lord, gets perturbed and mistaking the sound for the shouts of enemies, sends forth waves of fiery poison from his thousand expanded hoods. The Lord is omnipotent and no one can do Him harm. Śrī Vaikuntha is

a hallowed place where nothing sinful can ever occur. The denizens there are absolutely devoted to the Lord and there cannot be even a thought of doing evil to any one, much less to the Paramātmā. In spite of all this their solicitude for the safety of God is so much that they apprehend danger even from the devotees themselves. When they reason, they will realize that fear of danger to God is out of place. But in their love they suspect even the rustle of a blade of grass. All this is a unique experience for the Mukta which just begins then and which will go on for ever without interruption or end.

The Mukta passes through the arrays of Nityasūris admiring and praising them. There is a beautiful dais there on which the Lord and His consort are seated conferring Bliss on all of them there and protection to all everywhere. On one side of it are seated the earlier Ācāryas who are occupying a place of honour. They are immensely pleased to see the Mukta there and are filled with a feeling of gratification and joy at the thought that the efforts made by the Lord to redeem the Jīva through them as an instrument have at last borne fruit. One Jīvātmā has broken the shackles of Māyā or Prakṛti and has attained Release. The Mukta also sees them and with gratitude and reverence falls at their feet and says: "There was a time when I was steeped in ignorance and egotism and knew nothing of God and the godly. You, out of your innate Mercy lighted the lamp of knowledge in my mind and dispelled all the darkness of ignorance and evil propensities resulting therefrom. You put me in the right path and brought about my redemption. I cannot find any recompense for the disinterested help of you all. Be pleased to place your feet on my head and bless me to have the Supreme Bliss for ever." Having attained their graceful blessing and permission, the Mukta goes towards the Divine throne of the Lord which is effulgent and sublime. He is now in the immediate presence of the Lord and is before the throne of Divinity.

### **36. *Divya-yoga-paryāṅka. The Couch of Divinity.***

The Mukta or the Released Soul has been conducted by the Nityasūris to the immediate presence of the Lord Who is seated majestically on a throne-divine and effulgent, and is ruling over all the worlds as their undisputed monarch.

The Upaniṣads and the Bhagavat Śāstras speak in glorious terms about the composition and nature of this Throne. It has brought together within itself for the dēlectation of the Lord all the basic Realities or Ādhāra-Tattvas of both the Nitya-vibhūti and Līlā-vibhūti. The Paryāṅka Vidyā of the Upaniṣad describes that the legs, planks and other parts of this Throne are composed of Tattvas (Realities) of the Past and the Future (Bhūta and Bhaviṣyat). It has within it all the things in the infinite Time. The Bhagavat Śāstras, which are said to have been revealed by the Lord Himself and which are known as Pāñcarātra Saṁhitās, declare, some in detail and some in brief, that the different component parts of the Divine Throne are composed of various Tattvas in the following manner. Virtue, Knowledge, Non-attachment and Rulership (Dharma, Jñāna, Vairāgya and Aiśvarya) form the four feet. R̥gveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda are the four cross-bars that support the planks. The four Yugas—Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali—also serve the same purpose. The three qualities—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas—are the three-fold planks in the centre. All of them are Nityasūris who preside over the various things that form the limbs of the Divine Throne. For the first time, the Mukta has a direct and clear vision of all these things about which he had only heard from the Ācāryas or read in the Scriptures. He is filled with joy and wonder as he sees them.

On this Divine Throne is a Divine Lotus which has a radiance similar to the dazzling lustre of billions of suns risen simultaneously. It has eight petals of immense proportions, spreading in eight directions. On each of them is a divine damsel doing service to the Lord by waving the Cāmara. In the front part of the peri-carp is another. All these Damsels are of surpassing beauty and of milk-white complexion, as though fashioned out of the digits of the spotless full moon. The names of these Damsels are: Vimalā, Utkarṣiṇī, Jñāna, Kriyā, Yoga, Prahvī, Satya and Īśānā. Anugraha is the name of the ninth Damsel standing in front. Every one of them has a cāmara in hand, which on account of its brilliance, appears to be composed of the moonlight itself. When the Jīva was in the mortal world, his daily longing was: "When will the Lord give me the command to serve Him with cāmara in hand?" Now when the Mukta sees the Damsels with chāmaras in their hands

serving the Lord, he feels assured that his desire for such service will soon be fulfilled.

In the centre of the Divine Lotus is the Divine Pericarp which is of such dazzling brightness and immensity that even hundreds of golden mountains (Meru-mountains) gathered together can hardly equal a part of one of its atoms. On this pericarp are the Orbs of Fire, Moon and Sun.

Over all this is Ādiśeṣa, the Divine Serpent of thousand hoods, also known by the name of Ananta. He is eternally pure by nature and white in complexion. His immense body is in the form of coils and looks like a collection of the Milky Oceans (Kṣīra-samudras) of every one of the innumerable Brahmāṇḍas—all of them arrayed in layers and beautifully spread. It almost looks like a coverlet for the Divine Yogic Couch which is spotless, vast and lofty.

Ādiśeṣa has infinite might and knowledge because of which he is able to carry on his body the Lord for ever and keep Him comfortable—the Lord Who is Himself the abode and supporter of all. Ādiśeṣa is known by several names, each one of which is significant, and connotes the various actions of his. He is known as 'Seṣa' which means one that subserves the ends of another. Here he serves the Lord in different ways assuming appropriate forms. To the Lord he is the abode and bed, throne and foot-stool, raiment and pillow, and also the Umbrella which keeps off the sun and the rain from the Lord. His name is Ananta, meaning infinite, since his greatness is such that he keeps on his lap (that is, just one part of his body) the Lord who is declared by the Scriptures to be beyond the three limitations of space, time and object.

The body of Ādiśeṣa has a divine fragrance which is capable of infusing perfume even into the Lord Who is said to be all-fragrance (Sarva-gandha). The body again is soft and gentle and suited to the nature of the Lord and His Consort whom he bears; for the Lord is delicate like the flower's smile while His Consort is even more delicate having for Her abode the lotus of never changing fragrance. The Divine couple Divya Dampati Who together are the Supreme Godhead, are seated majestically on Ādiśeṣa as all the three worlds bow before them.

The body of Ādiśeṣa with its coils is cool and milkwhite like the whirlpool of a stream of Nectar. The thousand hoods which are

expanded are lofty and wide. They have the semblance of the discs of thousands of full moons gathered at one place and a succession of white umbrellas held over the Lord below. The gems in the hoods are shedding such a gentle lustre of golden hue that one is led to think that even the Paramapada which goes by the name of Puṇḍarika (White Lotus), becomes endowed with effulgence only because of this.

The sight of Ādiśeṣa possessed of such greatness creates in the Mukta a thousand phased and single minded desire for the enjoyment of the Lord even as Ādiśeṣa does with his thousand-faced and single necked body.

As the Mukta draws near he becomes the cynosure of the two thousand eyes of Ādiśeṣa. He has a full vision of the Lord of Sapphire-hue on the white Ādiśeṣa and joins the company of the Superior Angels for whom the Lord is the single object of worship and enjoyment. The Mukta has thus attained the utmost proximity to the Lord and stands before Him.

### **37. *Mukta Before The Lord***

There was a time when the Mukta was a Jīva caught up in the cycle of births and deaths from time immemorial. By a stroke of fortune due to some Puṇya, he adopted some means to please the God who also promised redemption; and as a mumukṣu he waits for the time of departure from this world. During his sojourn here his longing for the attainment of the Lord becomes greater and greater day by day. His daily prayer is: 'When shall I see with my eyes Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa, who is the Ruler, Deity and riches of my race, who is my Mother, my Father and my all? When shall I contact with my head the two lotus-like feet of the Lord? When shall I enter the two lotus-like feet with a desire to serve there giving up all craving for other forms of enjoyment? When shall I, having become fit to serve at Bhagavān's lotus-like feet and having such service as my sole joy, render service at His feet? When will the Lord look at me with the cool glance of His eyes and command me with His sweet, cool and pleasant voice to render service to Him?'

Such has been the longing of the Jīva day and night. When the final moment comes, he casts his body and soars up high embraced

by the arms of the Paramātmā residing in his heart to reach Vaikuṇṭha. When he arrives there having been released from all bondage, he is welcomed heartily by all the denizens and taken before the Lord who has been eagerly looking for the company of the Jīva.

The Lord, with His Consorts, is seated on the divine and magnificent couch, the body of Ādiśeṣa. The Lord on the Ādiśeṣa resembles an emerald mountain perched on a gold mountain. He is the Lord of all the Nityasūris of the Paramapada and wields undisputed sway over all the worlds. He is between the ages of boyhood and youth. His body in the midst of a flood of radiance resembles a million suns assembled in one place. The Lord has a beauty which imparts nourishment to the Universe and a lustre equal to that of tens of thousands of full-moons.

The Lord is the Supreme Ruler of the Universe; and Lakṣmī, Bhūmidevī and Nīlādevī, his three Consorts are like His three qualities—Mercy, Forbearance and Munificence Incarnate. On His right is Lakṣmī, who is in every way worthy of Him and pleasing to Him by Her nature, beauty, character and charms. She is the Nectar of nectar and Her charm is so infinite and bewitching that it always appears new and fresh and evokes surprise as if unseen before, though enjoyed for ever. Lakṣmī is ever united with the Lord in all His forms, Supreme as well as Incarnate, and with Her abode on His chest adorns Him like a never-fading garland. By Her glances Lakṣmī confers on all every kind of wealth and prosperity. Standing beside the Lord possessed of a charmingly blue complexion, She is like a steadfast lightning shining in the midst of a water-laden cloud. As the Supreme Consort of the God of gods, She has majesty, and as the loving Mother of the Universe She has easy accessibility. Lakṣmī fills the whole Vaikuṇṭha with the splendour of Her form. She gives orders to all the attendants like Ādiśeṣa, Viṣvakṣena and others to render the service due to the Lord in states and situations. Her status is such that along with the Lord as Her counterpart, She is the Supreme Ruler of all, the object of enjoyment of all, and the recipient of the services of all.

On the left of the Lord on the throne is Bhūmidevī, who is said to be the alter ego of Lakṣmidevī. She is blue in complexion

quite befitting the azure-coloured body of the Lord, and serves as a model for the same which is also described as being dark green in colour. By the side of Bhūmidevī is Nīlādevī who is beautiful and charming like a fresh-blown blue-lotus. With Her divine form, charming dalliance, and generous acts, Nīlādevī lulls the Lord into Yogic Slumber; and makes Him oblivious of the faults of the erring souls. Thus She averts the displeasure of the Lord on them. Both Bhūmidevī and Nīlādevī are on the left as if to indicate to the devotees the proper place for them to stand and serve.

Thus the Lord, with His three Consorts, Śrī, Bhūmi and Nīlā is seated on the divine couch Ādiśeṣa. He is the unconditioned Master of all and to Him service is to be rendered. He is again the one object of unsurpassed enjoyment and so is Rasa (Bliss) and Ānanda (Joy) to those that serve Him. The Mukta has a perfect vision of the Lord and His Consorts and enjoys them to the fullest extent with his knowledge which has become all-expensive and knows no limitation at any time thereafter.

The Divya-maṅgala-vigraha or the form of the Lord which the Mukta enjoys is said to be superior even to the essential nature of the Lord which is blemishless and blissful. Therefore the Lord Himself is enamoured of it in preference to His essential nature (Svarūpa). It is a four-armed Nectar. Its hue is like that of the water-laden clouds playing on mountain tops, fresh blown blue lotuses floating on water, the deep blue sea with its surging waves or the dancing peacocks in the midst of green verdure. It is again like gold or azure. The divine body with the limbs in perfect proportions and with the ornaments in faultless decoration is a perennial source of infinite Bliss to the Angels there. The Mukta also becomes lost in its enjoyment and in the manner of the seekers after release, sings, praises and dances. All his gestures are pleasing to the Lord. And the Mukta bursts out in the eulogy of the Lord.

### 38. *Mukta's Eulogy of the Lord*

The Vedas and particularly the Upaniṣadic portions of them, are the only source from which we can acquire a knowledge of Paramātmā, the Lord, and His Nitya-vibhūti. Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. The Ātmyas, and saints and sages like them, have been blessed by the



Lord with a direct vision of all this, and therefore they have been able to experience the beautiful form of the Lord and His qualities. This has transported them into raptures and they have poured forth their souls in songs praising the beauty of the Lord, the charm of His qualities and the glory of His possessions. Their songs, therefore, are but an elaboration of the ideas revealed briefly by the Upaniṣads. From this we can know for certain that the teachings of the Upaniṣads about the beautiful form and auspicious qualities of the Lord are not a mere figment of imagination, but a representation of truth. This is corroborated by the Ālvārs, who saw, enjoyed and sang.

And now to the history of the Jīva. When the Jīva is redeemed from Saṁsāra by the Merciful Lord and taken to Śrī Vaikuṇṭha, perfect vision of the Lord, His consorts and all His retinue and paraphernalia. He sees that the Nitya-sūris or Ever-free Souls are ever praising the Lord and serving Him in diverse ways. The Mukta also becomes one of them and begins to enjoy the Lord like them. The bliss of experience is so immense that he can hardly contain it within himself, and as an outlet for the overflowing Joy, he bursts forth into songs eulogising the Lord and His beauty. What the Mukta enjoys and sings there in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha is very much akin to the experiences of the Ālvārs here. So if we dive into the songs of the Ālvārs, we can have an idea of the experience of the Mukta in his enjoyment of the Lord. Such songs have been called up and strung together for our benefit by Śrī Vedānta Deśika, our great Āchārya, in one of his Rahasya Granthas, Paramapada Sopāna, by name. Śrī Deśika was an incarnation of God Himself and therefore, on account of his omniscience, he had an insight into all that the Jivātmā longs for here as a Mumukṣu and enjoys there as a Mukta. We can do no better than give a rendering in English of a few of those passages brimming with love, ecstasy and devotion for the benefit of our readers while dealing with this part of the subject.

Now the Mukta is in the divine presence of the Lord on His Serpent-Couch (Ādiśeṣa) and has a full and direct vision of the Lord. He is lost in the sudden flow of Bliss and then slowly collects himself. He observes closely the various beautiful limbs of the Lord from head to foot one after another and begins to sing their glory to give vent to his feelings even as the Nityasūris are doing.

The lovely face of the Lord adorned by the sparkling crown is the first thing to be enjoyed in all its details. The radiant crown on the Lord's head attracts the eyes of the Mukta. It looks as though a thousand suns are assembled together and shining in one place. Below it are seen the soft curly locks of hair which vie with pitch-dark night in hue. The two—the light of the sun and the darkness of the night—are really incompatible, but by the unique power of the Lord to reconcile things that are mutually contradictory, the two have been brought together in a harmonious combination. The Mukta sings about the crown in joy: "Can it be that the radiance of Thy face, O Lord, has blossomed as the lustrous crown on Thy head or is it a crown?"

—Tiruvoimozhi 3-1-1.

Below the crown are the soft locks of hair gently moving. They are dark and glossy like a swarm of bees which are hovering about eager to drink the honey from the lotus-face of the Lord. The Mukta looks at them and says: "Are these a bunch of fine threads spun out of the innermost fibres of the all-powerful darkness that envelops the entire Universe? No, it cannot be. Where is so much beauty in it? They are really the locks of hair that adorn Thy head."

—Tiruvoimozhi 7-7-9.

The eyes of the Mukta then come down and settle on the arc-like forehead with the curly locks of hair playing above. It resembles the curved digit of the moon on the eighth day of the light-fortnight—Aṣṭamī-candra in Śukla-pakṣa—one half of the moon shining with lustre and the other half embraced by a shade of darkness. Seeing the forehead, the Mukta wonders if it is the spotless moon that perpetually shines devoid of the two states of waxing and waning or if it is poisonous leaf that torments those who have fallen in love with the Lord.

—Tiruvoimozhi 7-7-7.

Below the forehead are the two dark and curved eyebrows which have a charm of their own. They are like two blue lines drawn to test the sublime beauty of the forehead even as the purity of gold is tested by rubbing it on a touchstone. The Mukta begins to muse as he sees them: "Are they a pair of bows that are strung ready to strike at the life of the poor devotees who are in love? Or

are they the sugar-cane-bows of Manmatha, the God of Love possessed of ever-lasting qualities?"

—*Tiruvoimozhi 7-7-4.*

The lovely eyes below the eye-brows now attract the attention of the Mukta. By their charm they vanquish those who arrogate to themselves the quality of rulership which belongs to the Lord and make them fall at the feet of the Lord, saying: "Homage to Thee, the Ruler of all rulers." The Lord's eyes are dark and big, sparking and marked by rosy lines. Seeing them the Mukta says: "I know not if they are a couple of gods of death who consume the lives of the helpless devotees in love or if they are the bewitching eyes of Kṛṣṇa, the wielder of Cakra."

—*Tiruvoimozhi 7-7-1.*

Between the eyes and lower down is the long and divine nose of the Lord that breathes the fragrance of the Vedas. The sight of it sets the Mukta thinking: "Is it really a creeper of the Kalpaka plant that rises from the ocean nearby or is it a tender sprout?"

—*Tiruvoimozhi 7-7-2.*

### 39. *Mukta's Enjoyment of Bliss*

The Mukta or the Freed Soul is in the immediate presence of the Lord and has a full vision. He enjoys the Lord's beautiful features. He begins with the crown on the head and passes on to the locks of hair, the forehead, the eye-brows, the eyes and the nose. He gives expression to the thoughts that surge in his mind as he sees them one after the other.

His eyes next settle on the Lord's cheeks. They are soft and glowing, and serve as shining mirrors to the Divine Consorts on either side. Their sublime beauty is beyond description and so the Mukta gives up the attempt to describe the cheeks and moves about describing the parts of the face around them. He sings: "Big and red are the eyes; rosy and ripe are the lips; and like pearls do the teeth sparkle in the mouth. The dangling ear-rings, fish-like in form, are shedding rays of lustre."

—*Tiruvoimozhi 8-8-1.*

The divine lips of the Lord, red like coral arrest the eyes of the Mukta and he exclaims in wonder: "Is it a fruit that is always ripe? Or is it the invincible sin of mine, a confirmed sinner? Or is it a piece of fresh coral full of beauty? How charming is the fragrance of the lips! Can we say it has the fragrance of camphor or it has the sweet odour of the lotus-flower? The beautiful coral-like lips-have they a sweetness that is perpetual?"

—*Tiruvoimozhi 7-7-3.*

The Mukta is so overwhelmed with emotion that he can hardly find words to give expression to it. Seeing the state of the Mukta, the Lord puts on a smile on his rosy lips that reveals the pearl-white teeth within. The pure smile on the Lord's face is bewitching and it leaves the Mukta in a puzzle: "Is it an uncommon lightning of white hue that shines perpetually and sheds a rosy lustre? Or is it the radiance of the beautiful teeth that ravishes my soul?"

—*Tiruvoimozhi 7-7-5.*

Then the eyes of the Mukta travel beyond and settle on the lovely ears that are like swings of lustre. Now he puts the question: "Are they the ears of the Lord or but a sprout that gives birth to fish (i.e., fish-like ear-rings)?"

—*Tiruvoimozhi 7-7-6.*

Before leaving the face, the Mukta dwells once again on the beauty of the entire face to which even the moon with all its lustre in full spreading around is not equal. He exclaims in wonder: "Is that a radiant disc adorned by its own lustre (the face), and possessed of lotus-flowers (eyes), a creeper (nose), coral (lips), bows (eye-brows), the self-adorned pearls (teeth), sprouts (ears) and the cool and splendid digit of the moon (forehead)?"

—*Tiruvoimozhi 7-7-8.*

After the face the neck of the Lord is the object enjoyed by the Mukta. He thinks of the voice proceeding from within which is loving, sweet and majestic as the Lord accosts those that are eager to serve and gives them commands. There are three lines round the neck which are not different from the impressions left by the shining bangles on the wrists of the Consorts (while being embraced by them). The shape of the neck is like that of the

Conch (Pāñcājanya), but rendered blue by the complexion of the Lord. The Mukta says: "This is the throat that swallowed the worlds at the time of deluge to preserve them and that brought about my redemption."

(*Amalanāḍippirān* 6)

Then the arms of the Lord attract the eyes of the Mukta. They are four in number as if to show that the Lord can confer all the four kinds of Puruṣārthas or goals of life, namely, Dharma (Virtue), Artha (Wealth), Kāma (Pleasure) and Mokṣa (Salvation). They are the means by which the Lord bestows Himself and His all on those who love and render service to Him, however small it may be, as in the case of Hanumān whom Rāma embraced in order to recompense for the service he rendered. The arms, says the Mukta, are like the divine Kalpaka trees, both in shape and quality—strong and sturdy in form as well as munificent by nature.

The broad chest between the arms is the next thing on which the Mukta feasts his eyes. It is beautiful like an emerald slab and adorned by dangling strings of pearls. Śrīvatsa, the triangular mole, and Kaustubha, the divine gem, set off its beauty which is again enhanced by the Vanamālā, the divine garland of flowers of variegated colours. It is a source of joy and hence it is that Lakṣmi is perpetually seated there, all the while saying: "I cannot be away from this even for a moment." The Mukta says, "It is this lovely chest adorned by the necklace of pearls that has enslaved and redeemed me."

—*Amalanāḍippirān* 5

Below the chest is the stomach in which the Lord keeps all the worlds during times of deluge and preserves them. The Mukta is struck by the wonderful nature of the stomach and exclaims: "The Lord swallows in a gulp all the worlds with the seven clouds, seven seas and seven mountains; and yet there is room in His stomach and His appetite is not satisfied."

—*Tiruvoimozhi* 10-8-2.

Then the yellow garment (Pītāmbara) of the Lord catches the Mukta's eyes. On the Lord's body which resembles an emerald-mountain, the garment of golden hue seems to shed the lustre of the gem. The Mukta asks the Lord Himself: "The radiating lustre

of Thy waist seems to spread around as the shining garment and the various ornaments of Thine. Is it not so?"

—*Tiruvoimozhi 3-1-1.*

The Mukta comes lower still and beholds the strong shanks which run fast to redeem the erring souls who are ever walking fast in the path of birth and death. He wonders at the indescribable beauty of the shanks which, in shape, appears to be the model, as it were, to the bugle of the God of Love (Manmatha), or the betelbearing cup or the quiver of arrows. He exclaims: 'How beautiful they are!'

The Mukta next looks at the beautiful feet of the Lord that are impartial and stand as a common deity of worship to all the souls—good and bad alike, and that are borne even by the Vedas as a crest-jewel on their head. He begins to admire them and say: "The sign of a conch in one foot and that of a discus in the other"; and "the ten toes in the two feet; how beautiful and in perfect proportion all of them are!"

—*Periālvār tirumozhi 1-7-6; 1-2-2.*

Under the feet there is a lovely lotus flower on which the Lord stands—the Ādhāra-padma. The Mukta sees how the lotus and the feet are befitting each other and wonders: "Is it a lotus or the lustre of the feet that has blossomed as such?"

—*Tiruvoymozhi 3-1-1*

Thus the Mukta observes and enjoys the divine limbs of the Lord which seem to adorn one another and concludes: "The chest and lips, eyes and arms, navel and feet and garments of the handsome Lord—they are like a bed of lotuses on a mountain of Zephyr."

—*Tiruvoymozhi 8-9-1*

#### 40. *The Ascent Of The Mukta on The Divine Couch*

The Jīva, who was running away from Paramātmā all these ages, now comes back to Him like the prodigal son to his father. Paramātmā feels happy and showers His love and affection by fully manifesting Himself. The Jīva too sees the divine and auspicious form (Divyamaṅgala-vigraha) of Bhagavān and enjoys it from

head to foot, limb by limb, adoring and praising each one of them as best as he can.

Then the Jīva beholds the ornaments on the body of Bhagavān that are befitting Him and loved by Him. "All of them are beautiful and shining like lightnings with a steady glow. The sword and the crown, the conch and the discus, thread and necklace—many are the ornaments that adorn my Lord who showers on me the great love He has for the Transcendent World of Splendour (Nitya-vibhūti)" — says the Mukta. The Conch and the Discus are weapons that adorn each other, but in the arms of Bhagavān they are ornaments also. They shine on His body like the bright Sun and the full-Moon perched on a great mountain of black pigment. The Mukta wants to sing their praise and begins: 'The Conch and the Discus.' But he is so overwhelmed with joy that words fail him and he completes what he wants to say by joining his hands in salutation.

The Jīva is charmed by the auspicious qualities of the Lord which endear Him to all even as the qualities of depth and sweetness of the Milky Ocean do. They are usually classified under two heads—Paratva and Saulabhya. Under Paratva come the qualities that establish the supremacy and the pre-eminence of the Lord, and under Saulabhya those that make Him easily accessible to all. The Mukta speaks in wonder: 'Thy lovable qualities, My Lord, that are sublime and unexcelled! They are so fascinating that they draw the mind of even a sinner like myself.'

—*Tiruvmozhi 1-1-1, 8-1-8.*

The Jīva feels highly gratified that he is able to see and enjoy Bhagavān—His handsome features, charming ornaments, shining weapons, and auspicious qualities. The bewitching eyes of the Lord seem to speak and convey the message of love, and His qualities like amiability comfort, and console the Mukta. He feels encouraged and walks near the footstool where stands Śrī Śaṭhakopa the Divine Footwear or Pāduka of the Lord. In all humility he prays to Bhagavān: 'Lord of Śrī Vaikuṇṭha! Thou art possessed of unexcelled Bliss! Be pleased to place Thy feet on me, Thy slave.'

—*Tiruvmozhi 8-1-8*

Bhagavān is immensely pleased by the love and devotion of the Jīva, and crowns his head with His lotus-like feet that lend fragrance to the hands of even the Divine Consorts, Lakṣmī and Bhūmī — Lakṣmī, who by Her tresses bestows fragrance on all including Bhagavān, and Bhūmī, whose very nature is sweet fragrance. This is really an act of coronation for the Mukta to proclaim him as the undisputed sovereign of the domain of Service, not only to the Lord, but also to those that adore Him.

At long last the desires of the Jīva have been realized, who has been earnestly praying: 'Confer on me Thy Mercy, O Lord, so that I may avoid falling before others in supplication and I may attain the good fortune of being under Thy feet.' (*Tiruvoymozhi* 3-2-4) Now the Mukta joyfully sings from experience:— 'The tender and flower-like feet of the Lord abiding in my heart are on my head—the feet that cannot be easily attained. I feel blessed and happy as though I am in the midst of an Ocean of Nectar.' *Tirunedunandakam* -1, *Tiruvoymozhi* 4-9-9, *Periālvār Tiruvoymozhi* 5-4-7 Encouraged by the Bliss of experience, he resorts to Bhagavān's feet that are the only prop for the destitute. Holding those feet for support, he places his feet on the Divine Couch, Ādiśeṣa and ascends it.

The lotus-eyed Bhagavān, Who is the protector of all and Who is a Mother and Father, feels immensely happy as one would be by having his dear son on his lap. By His innate affection He confers on the Jīva all the qualities natural to him, but which were not manifest so far, and blesses him with a permanent seat under His feet—the only place proper for all the souls under all conditions and for all time. Bhagavan is the loving Master of the Universe and so feels that the redemption of a Jīva is His own gain, though it is the Jīva who stands to gain by it. Bhagavān wants to increase His joy by hearing the Jīva himself speak about his redemption and good fortune, and so lovingly puts the question to him—"Who are you?"

The response of the Mukta to this loving question of Bhgavān will follow—

#### 41. Mukta's Prayer

Once the Mukta has reached the presence of the Lord, the realization dawns on him that Paramātmā has redeemed him from



the abyss of Samsāra. When he was in it, the Mukta used to think because of the immense disparity between himself and the Paramātmā—"Where am I, the worst sinner, and where is the Lord with His Ocean-like greatness?" Now he has been taken away from the midst of the numberless souls in bondage and made one of the numerous Muktas and Nityasūris in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. However much he may desire, the Mukta is not able to find any recompense to the Lord for the great help He has given. So with all humility he submits to the Lord the thoughts that surge in his mind in the following words:

"I am Thy slave, my Lord, but from beginningless time I was sunk in the Ocean of Samsāra-cycle of births and deaths. But now I have realized my real nature that I am inseparable from Thee as an attribute of Thine and am steeped in Thy Divine essential nature which is an immeasurable Ocean of Sweet Nectar. I have also realized the truth that Thou art the Inner Soul of all the worlds and that my essential nature is dependent on Thy essential nature, that all my movements—forward or backward—are dependent on Thy will, and that Thy pleasure is my pleasure.

My nature is such that the specific names like man, god etc., do not signify me. The letter 'M' in the Praṇava reveals that I am the Dāsa or 'slave' of Paramātmā i.e., Thyself; and so 'Dāsa' is the only name for me.

"Thou art the Lord of the Eternal Angels resident in the Highest Heaven, and I have become one with Thee like honey and milk, ghee and sugarcane juice and nectar. I have attained an absolute expansion of knowledge by which I see myself in all beings of all the worlds. I have taken everything that exists in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha as well as the human world as instruments in rendering service to Thee.

"All the joys of all the souls resulting from the enjoyment of wealth on earth or in Svarga (i.e. Aiśvarya) or from the enjoyment of the Pure Self (i.e. Kaivalya) can but be called a drop in the Ocean of my happiness which is insatiate and unlimited. I am experiencing Thee and am having thoughts of singing Thy sublime Glory which is beyond the ken of even the Vedas: I can proudly say with Nammālvār that no one can equal me in eulogising Thee, the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha.

“My earnest prayer to Thee is that Thou shouldst be pleased to take me as Thy servant and accept perpetual service at my hands”.

Paramātmā hears this humble prayer of the Mukta and is immensely pleased as a father will be on hearing the lovely lisps of his innocent child still in the stage of suckling. With pride and gratification, He looks at the face of Lakṣmī, the universal Mother, seated beside Him. The whole world rests on the play of Her glances. The Lord is always guided in His acts by Her wishes expressed by Her glances which control the differences in the status of the souls in bondage. He looks at Her, because She always give more than what is prayed for.

Thus both the Lord and His Consort are of identical opinion in blessing the Mukta, who, therefore, is the recipient at once of the Grace of the Lotus-born Lakṣmī and the Universal Master.

This is only the beginning of the complete and perfect realization of God that falls to the lot of the Released Soul (Mukta) in Mokṣa. The Mukta is omniscient like Paramātmā, and by this infinite and all-embracing knowledge of his, he has a direct vision of the essential nature, form, qualities etc. of the Lord. This vision is delightful and so he wants to have more and more of it. This is known as Para-bhakti or Higher Devotion. It is different from Bhakti, which is its cause and which is born of the study of the Scriptures and the company of the good.

As the Para-bhakti or Higher Devotion continues, the all-embracing knowledge of the Mukta also grows and this is called Para-jñāna or Greater knowledge. This is like the vision that Arjuna had of the cosmic form or Virāt-svarūpa of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa as described in Viśvarūpa-adhyāya (Chapter XI of *Bhagavad Gītā*). As a result of this knowledge the Mukta's zeal for the enjoyment of the Lord grows more and more intense and it takes him to the stage of Parama-bhakti or Highest devotion. This is that stage in which the Jīvātmā cannot exist even one moment without the experience of Divine Bliss. Nammālvār was in this state in the last decade of his *Tiruvoimozhi* and he even went to the extent of swearing on the name of the Lord and on that of His Consort that He must show Himself and give His enjoyment. The stages of

Para-bhakti, Para-Jñāna and Parama-bhakti are going on endlessly in a cycle in the Mukta and therefore the joy is insatiable.

In this manner the Released Soul has the Bliss of the experience of Paramātmā which is full, continuous, eternal, clear and having no other end in view, and which results from Para-bhakti, Para-Jñāna and Parama-bhakti. The Mukta finds his sole joy in fulfilling all the purposes of Bhagavān in all states and situations without any exception owing to the infinite and unequalled delight arising from such an experience.

Such is the nature of the highest goal or Parama Puruṣārtha of the individual Soul—the enjoyment of Bhagavān which finds its fruition and development in His service, which has a beginning, but no end.

## 42. The State of Release

The Mukta or the Freed Soul has attained the Highest Goal (Parama-puruṣārtha) which consists of the enjoyment of Bhagavān with all His attributes—form, qualities, Nitya-Vibhūti, and Līlā-Vibhūti. This enjoyment finds its fulfilment in service to Bhagavān. The word 'Paramapada' used in this connection signifies three things: (1) Svarūpa or the Essential Nature of Bhagavān; (2) Śrī Vaikuṇṭha or the Highest Heaven; and (3) Jīva-svarūpa or the essential nature of Jīva—since the feature of being the object of attainment and enjoyment is common to all the three of them. The svarūpa of Bhagavān is called Paramapada, because it is the ultimate and supreme object of enjoyment, being of unsurpassed agreeableness. The perfect enjoyment of the Bhagavat-svarūpa occurs only after reaching the most delightful region far superior to all others. Therefore that region, Śrī Vaikuṇṭha also is known as Paramapada. The svarūpa or the essential nature of the Jīva, which has for its attributes knowledge and happiness, is also referred to by the term Paramapada since it is the recipient of this joy resulting from the attainment of Bhagavān and since it is also among the Vibhūtis or the glorious possessions of the Supreme Lord. In short, Bhagavān and His two Vibhūtis—Nitya and Līlā—are the objects of enjoyment for the Mukta in the State of Release.

Here a doubt may arise: one can understand the statement that Bhagavān and His qualities that are auspicious, Nitya-Vibhūti which is the abode of Śuddha Sattva, and one's own essential nature which is self-luminous and blissful are objects of delight to the Mukta. But the objects of Līlā-vibhūti i.e., this world of ours, are found to be disagreeable by sense-perception and other means of knowledge. The Śāstras also lay down that they should be given up. How can then the objects of this world be agreeable to the Mukta? It was he who had personal experience of the disagreeable nature of those objects when he was in Saṁsāra and it is he who has now been lifted away from them by the Grace of Paramātmā.

The answer is: there is nothing inconsistent in this. They appeared to be disagreeable to the Jīva when he was in Saṁsāra because of the Karma which was sticking to him from time immemorial. Now he has been freed from all Karma and has become a Mukta. He looks upon those objects as the glorious possessions of Bhagavān, his Lord, and therefore they are agreeable to him. This can be substantiated by two illustrations from life. Milk, which is normally sweet, is bitter to the taste of a person who is suffering from excessive bile; but it tastes sweet to the sameman when he is cured of that disease. Again when a prince is in the prison house undergoing punishment for some offence committed by him, the prison is disagreeable to him. But when the emperor is pleased to set him free, anoint him as the crown-prince and allow him to enjoy all pleasures similar to his own, the same prison-house, though it has not undergone any change, is agreeable to the prince, since it is now a symbol of his father's glory. Thus the same object is found to be agreeable and disagreeable to the same person under different circumstances on account of some adventitious conditions.

As long as the Jīva is in this world bound by Karma and is not blessed with union with the Lord, the objects of this world will appear disagreeable or slightly agreeable. But when he becomes a Mukta and enjoys without intermission the Bliss of Bhagavān, the same objects are agreeable as they are the glorious possession of the Lord. Therefore there is nothing inappropriate in this.

The Mukta also renders service to the Lord which is the result of the overflow of love born of the perfect enjoyment of Brahman.

Śrī Deśika says that doubts are likely to arise in the minds of people about the Tattvaṣ and other things and it is essential that the doubts should be cleared. He has anticipated many such doubts in his several works and has also cleared them. God willing, we shall next deal with them in the form of questions and answers under the title '*Viśiṣṭādvaitic Catechism*'.

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The Mukta also renders service to the Lord which is the result of the overflow of love born of the perfect enjoyment of Brahman.

Therefore the ultimate goal of attainment is the full and perfect enjoyment of Brahman which extends also to those services that are done with love by the Mukta.

When this experience of Supreme Bliss has once been attained, there is no end to it, for it continues for all time. The Mukta who attains this Bliss is never born again in this world which is ever changing and which is the abode of suffering. But he may come here, even as Paramātmā does, by his own free will and pleasure and that also is of a form of service to the Lord. Even when he comes, there is no diminution in his knowledge or in his enjoyment of Brahman. It is in this sense that it is stated in the Śāstras that there is no return to Saṁsāra for the Mukta.

It can also be seen that there is nothing which will bring about the return of the Mukta to this world of ours against his will. For if he has to come, it must be due to one or other of the following reasons: his own desire, his ignorance, or the will of Paramātmā. Who is absolutely independent with no one to question his action. When the Mukta was in Saṁsāra (this world of ours), he had realized to a certain extent the trifling and transitory nature of worldly pleasures and had an aversion to their enjoyment. Now those defects are clearly perceived by him and so he will have no desire for them. The enjoyment of non-sentient things in this world and the enjoyment of his own pure self—both of them, independent of Paramātmā—will have no attraction for him. His only desire is to enjoy the Supreme Bliss of Paramātmā and therefore he will not think of coming back to Saṁsāra out of his free will or choice.

Nor is there the possibility of the Mukta's coming here out of ignorance. Karma in the form of Puṇya or Pāpa will cloud the mind and thereby produce false knowledge or ignorance. As the Mukta has been freed from all Karma, he has attained right knowledge about the nature of all things, which continues for ever. So there is no room for ignorance in him, because of which there may be a return.

Lastly the Mukta will not be obliged to come to this world of ours by the will of the Lord either. The return in this case may be caused by the displeasure of the Lord or by His unquestionable

independence or caprice. Both the causes do not exist here. The Mukta is no longer under the sway of the Śāstras which are the commands of the Lord. So there is no question of his violating them and thereby incurring the displeasure of the Lord. So he does not fall into Saṁsāra. On the other hand the Mukta is now omniscient and he directly perceives the wishes of the Lord and acts accordingly. True Paramātmā is absolutely independent and there is no one above Him to check Him if he should turn away the Mukta. But He will not do so, for He loves the Mukta as His own Self and would not like to part with him. Even if the latter should desire to go back to Saṁsāra and offer some one as a security, Paramātmā would not allow him to go.

Thus there is no return of the Mukta to Saṁsāra either by his own choice, or because of his ignorance or due to the will of Paramātmā. Therefore the ultimate goal of attainment known as Mukti is eternal for him and it will last as long as his soul lasts. This Mukti is Paripūrṇa Brahmānubhava and is of the nature of perfect and full enjoyment of Paramātmā (known as Para brahman) and all that pertains to Him—His essential nature (svarūpa), delightful form (vigraha), auspicious qualities (Kalyāṇaguṇa) and glorious possessions (Nitya and Līlā vibhūti). As stated already, this enjoyment does not stop there, but overflows into service to Paramātmā—service of all kinds, at all times and under all situations, for which there is no end—in a region from which there is no return.

***Sarvadeśa-sarvakāla-sarvāvasthociṭa-sarvavidha-kaiṅkarya***

With this we conclude the section on Puruṣārtha which is the last of the three prameyas or objects of knowledge, the other two being Tattva and Hita (Reality and Means) already dealt with.

We shall now take up the Pramāṇas or Instruments of Knowledge in Viśiṣṭādvaita, which give us the knowledge of Tattva, Hita and Puruṣārtha.



## IV EPISTEMOLOGY

### 43. *Theory of Knowledge*

So far we have been dealing with the fundamental doctrines of Viśiṣṭādvaita under the three heads of Tattva (Reality). Hita (Means) and Puruṣārtha (God). In this we have followed the method of treatment shown by our Ācāryas. The Tattvas are three: Cetana (Sentient being), Acetana (Non-sentient object) and Īśvara (the Ruler). Īśvara is Śrīman Nārāyaṇa and He is the Supreme Reality (Para Tattva). The other two are *Avara* Tattvas (Lower Realities). Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Soul or Paramātmā as He supports, controls and has for His purpose all the other things. So the latter—that is the Cetanas and Acetnas—are the body of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa as they are supported and controlled by Him and exist solēly for His purpose. He is the Supporter, Controller and Master; Ādhāra, Niyantā and Śeṣī. The Cetana and Acetana are the things that are supported and controlled and are subservient. They are His body Ādheya, Vidheya and Śeṣa and so He is their Ātmā. This body-soul-Relationship (Śarīra-ātma-bhāva-sambandha) is the most important of the fundamental doctrines of Viśiṣṭādvaita and this is the key which brings about the reconciliation between the apparently contradictory passages in the Upaniṣads known as Bheda Śrutis and Abheda Śrutis. The Bheda Śrutis declare the existence of several objects whereas the Abheda Śrutis proclaim the existence of only one Supreme thing to the exclusion of all.

The second main topic dealt with is Hita or the Means for the attainment of the Goal. The greatest means or Parama Hita is Bhaktiyoga or Prapattiyoga according to the competence of the person who adopts it for attaining a fruit.

The third main topic is the Highest Goal (Parama Puruṣārtha) which is Mokṣa or Salvation, which is all-embracing and eternal service of the Lord resulting from the attainment of the Supreme Bliss caused by the enjoyment of the Svarūpa (Essential Nature) and Rūpa (Form) qualities (Guṇa) and glorious possessions (Vibhūtis) of Para Brahman.

These three—Tattva, Hita and Puruṣārtha are collectively known as the Prameya or the Objects of knowledge. That which is the source of knowledge is known as Pramāṇa or Instruments of knowledge, which we shall take up now.

The first problem of philosophy is 'What can I know?' It is the problem of knowledge, its origin and nature and validity. All branches of learning—that is, Śāstras like Tarka, Mīmāṃsā and Vyākaraṇa have devoted considerable thought on this problem and have arrived at conclusions which are different. In Indian Philosophy this problem and its solutions are considered generally under Pramāṇa. There are different views about the number as well as the nature of these Pramāṇas. Some accept one, others two, yet others three, a few others four and some even six. Viśiṣṭādvaita accepts only three Pramāṇas, as can be seen from the works of our Ācāryas—Śrī Ālavandār, Śrī Rāmānuja, Parāśara Bhaṭṭa, Viṣṇucitta and Ātreya Rāmānuja (familiarily known as Vādiḥamsāmbuvāha). But it is Śrī Vedānta Deśika who has given a scientific and systematic treatment of the Pramāṇas adducing arguments in support of the Viśiṣṭādvaitic view and by way of refuting the views of other schools. *Nyāya Parisuddhi* and *Tattva Muktākalāpa* are the two works of Śrī Deśika which give us a complete knowledge of the subject—Pramāṇas. *Yatindra-mata-dīpikā* of Śrīnivāsa and *Śrī Rāmānuja Siddhanta Saṅgraha* of Caṇḍamāruta Śrīnivāsarāghava Ācārya are later treatises on the subject which are based on the works of Śrī Vedānta Deśika. We do not propose to enter into the intricate technicalities and baffling dialectics, but deal with this topic in a simple way.

What is Pramāṇa or Instrument of Knowledge? "Pramāka-  
raṇam Pramāṇam." That is Pramāṇa which is the producer of  
Pramā or right knowledge. Then what is Pramā? "Yathāvasthita-  
vyavahārānugūṇam jñānam Pramā." Pramā is knowledge of an  
object as it is and as it is conducive to our life. When there is a  
lotus before me and I see it, I become possessed of the knowledge  
of the lotus, and can speak of it as such. It is only this kind of  
knowledge that can be called Pramā or right knowledge. The two  
terms as it is (yathāvasthita) and conducive to life (vyavahāra-  
anugūṇa) are necessary in the definition. Otherwise the definition  
will be faulty. Suppose the definition of 'Pramā' is simply  
'knowledge', then the knowledge that sees silver in shell will also

become Pramā, which it is not. Hence the definition of Pramā takes the form: 'knowledge conducive to life.' Even then the defect is not completely removed inasmuch as a person in a moment of illusion may mistake the shell for silver. Hence (the further) qualifying term 'knowledge of the object as it is'.

In this connection it will be useful to know something of the nature of definition and the faults that it is liable to be subject to as it has been shown by our ancients. When we wish to define an object, say a cow, the definition should be exact and must be applicable to all cows to the exclusion of all other animals. It should not denote animals other than cow, nor should it fail to denote some that come under the species of 'cows'. The definition to be exact, must be free from the three faults noted below:

1. Ativyāpti will include things beyond the scope of the intended definition. For instance if one should define a cow as a 'horned animal', the definition will apply to 'goat' also which is a 'horned animal', but not only a cow. Hence here is the fault of 'Ativyāpti' or Over-pervasion, the existence of the sign in things other than the things to be defined.

2. Avyāpti is the fault of the Exclusion of things which ought to fall within the definition intended: e.g., Cow is white. This is also faulty as it fails to denote the cows which are of black or brown colour.

3. Asambhava is the Non-existence of the sign (definition) anywhere. For example, the statement that Jiva is an object of perception by the eye. This suffers from the fault of Asambhava as Jiva is not at all visible to the eye.

A correct definition should be free from all these three faults. We have seen that these are absent in the definition of Pramā given above. Next we shall take up the nature of Pramā or Right Knowledge which is the product of Pramāṇa.

#### 44. *Pramā (Right Knowledge)*

That which produces Pramā or right knowledge is Pramāṇa or Instrument of knowledge. Pramā is knowledge of an object as it is

Yathāvasthita and as is conducive to life or in consonance with experience (vyavahāra-anuṅa) Unless and until knowledge is conducive to the furtherance of our material, moral or spiritual ends, there is no proof that knowledge has come into being. So knowledge must have a purpose. If knowledge of an object must be about the object as it is, it must be free from faults like doubt (Samsāya) or Error (Viparyaya).

Doubt arises when we see an object before us, but are not able to know decisively what it is since it appears to possess qualities that pertain to other objects and are therefore mutually contradictory. For instance when we see at a distance some object standing, and are unable to decide whether it is a man or a post. The quality of being a post pertains only to the post and it distinguishes the post from all other objects. The quality of being a man pertains to a man and it differentiates him from all other things. The two are contradictory and cannot inhere in the same object. But both of them appear to exist in that object which is tall. As being tall is common to both, there is room for doubt.

In this way doubt (samsāya) arises when two mutually contradictory qualities are apprehended by two cognitions. Both the cognitions may belong to the same kind of Pramāṇa or Instrument of Knowledge or they may belong to any two of the three Pramāṇas—Perception, Inference and Scriptural Testimony. We shall proceed to give the examples of doubts which are the result of the conflict of these Pramāṇas, single or combined:

The doubt may be caused—

1. By two conflicting perceptions—When a person stands before a mirror, he sees his face in it. But when he tries to touch it with his hand, he does not feel it and thinks it is not there. Whether the face is in the mirror as shown by the sense of sight, or whether it is not as shown by the sense of touch is the doubt. Here both the cognitions come under Perception (Pratyakṣa).

2. By two Inferences (Anumāna)—A person sees smoke rising from a distant hill and from that he infers the existence of fire there. The next moment he infers that the fire is not there since he fails to see the light which will always be associated with

the fire if it were there. Here is a contradiction between two inferences and hence the doubt whether there is fire in the hill or not.

3. Two conflicting Scriptural texts (Śabda) may give rise to doubt. For instance, there are some Upaniṣadic Mantras known as Abheda Śrutis which seem to declare that Brahman only is real and therefore the world (jagat) is false. Bheda Śrutis reveal that the world and the Jīvas are as real as Brahman and therefore they are different entities. From these two texts the doubt arises whether the world is real or illusory.

4. Doubt may be the result of contradiction between Perception and Inference. For instance, to a person having some defect in the eye, the conch, which is white, appears yellow by Perception. But he infers that the object, being a conch, must be white. In this case two different kinds of Pramāṇas—Perception and Inference—are the cause of the doubt regarding the colour of the conch, it is really white or yellow.

5. Doubt may be caused by Perception and Scriptural Testimony also when they show things differently. For instance the Śāstras (Scriptural Testimony) say that the Ātmā is subtle and atomic in size, whereas Perception shows it to be gross. The result is the doubt with reference to the size of the Ātmā whether it is atomic or otherwise.

6. There may be conflict between Inference and Scriptural Testimony and that also will land a man in doubt. The Vaiśeṣika School of Atomism, for instance, traces the Universe, by a process of Inference, to the existence of primordial atoms and their varied combinations. But Scriptural Testimony declares in no uncertain terms that Brahman is the material cause of the Universe. This conflict between Inference and Śāstra leaves us in doubt whether the cause or the Universe is Brahman or the atoms.

Since the two conflicting cognitions proceeding from the Pramāṇas, belonging either to the same class or different classes, are equally poised, a person is not able to decide and he is in doubt. This stands in the way of right knowledge. Similarly Viparyaya or Error also is an impediment in the attainment of right knowledge. This error is of two kinds—Wrong Apprehension

(Anyathā jñāna) and Misconception (Viparīta jñāna). In Wrong Apprehension an object is cognised, but a quality that belongs to it is sublated or a quality that does not belong to it is attributed to it; for example, the statement that the doership of Ātmā is due to illusion comes under Wrong Apprehension. Ātmā is really the agent who does an act; but to say that his doership is due to illusion is wrong.

In the other kind of Error known as Misconception or Viparītajñāna, the object itself is mistaken for another, for example, mistaking a shell for silver. The distinction between Misconception and Wrong Apprehension lies in the fact that in the latter (i.e. Wrong Apprehension) the object with its attribute which defines its essential nature (svarūpa-nirūpaka dharma) is rightly cognised, but there is error with reference to the qualities that belong to it (nirūpita-svarūpa-viśeṣaṇa). That is to say, this is a case of dharmaviparyāsa—error regarding the quality or the attribute. In Misconception (Viparītajñāna) the specific quality defining the essential nature of the object fails to be cognised and that of another is apprehended with the result that the object itself is mistaken for another, for instance, the shell-silver. Here the object which is the 'shell' is seen, but not known as such. It is cognised as a piece of shining silver. So, this is a case of dharmiviparyāsa—error regarding the substratum or dharmī.

Therefore Pramā is that kind of knowledge which steers clear of all the three kinds of faults stated above. That which is the producer of this knowledge is Pramāṇa or Instrument of knowledge.

Next we shall take up the different Pramāṇas accepted by Viśiṣṭādvaita.

#### **45. Pramāṇa—Instrument of Knowledge**

When we speak of knowledge, it is taken for granted that there are three separate things connected with the function. There is a knowing Self or Ātmā who apprehends an object; there is a knowable substance that is cognised. Therefore it is other than the Ātmā, the knower. There is also the act of knowing which is an interaction between the knower and the knowable. This know-

ledge, if it is Pramā or right knowledge, must be of an object as it is and as it is in consonance with experience. The knowledge must also be free from defects of being a doubt or an error. This right knowledge is produced by the Instrument of knowledge or Pramāṇa which is of three kinds—Perception, Inference and Verbal Testimony.

Perception or Pratyakṣa is defined as the Means that produces direct knowledge. Sākṣātkāri pramākaraṇam pratyakṣam. It is in Pratyakṣa that the sense-organs directly come into contact with substances outside and produce knowledge. So, it is called Sākṣātkāri. This distinguishes Perception from Inferential knowledge which is indirect since the existence of fire is only inferred and not directly perceived. Knowledge born of Verbal Testimony also is indirect. Knowledge produced by defective means will be erroneous and so cannot be called Pramā or right knowledge.

The process by which the Perceptual knowledge is produced is as follows: Ātmā first contacts the mind, the mind the sense-organs and lastly the sense-organs the substance. The rule is that knowledge of substance is caused only when the sense-organs contact the substances directly.

When the sense of sight (Cakṣur Indriya) contacts a rose, it gives rise to Perceptual knowledge which is in the form of 'This is a rose.' This is called Visual Perception (Cākṣuṣa Pratyakṣa). Knowledge produced by the sense of hearing (Śrotrendriya) is Oracular Knowledge (Śrāvaṇa Pratyakṣa). The sense of smell (Ghrāṇendriya) gives us Nasal Perception (Ghrāṇaja Pratyakṣa). Palatal Perception (Rāsana Pratyakṣa) is the result of the working of the sense of taste (Rasanendriya). Tactual Perception (Spārsana Pratyakṣa) is caused by the Sense of Touch (Tvagindriya). The five sense-organs are different from the five physical limbs, viz., eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin respectively. The former inhere in the matter in a subtle form.

In ordinary human perception there is contact between the sense-organ and the external object. This contact is of two kinds—Saṁyoga and Saṁyukta—āśraya. Saṁyoga (Simple Contact) is the contact when a substance like the rose is the object of Perception. Saṁyuktāśraya is the other kind of contact by which a

quality or an attribute inseparably associated with a substance is cognised, for instance the fragrance or colour of a rose.

Perception is of two kinds—the Nitya or the Eternal and Anitya or Non-eternal. The perception of Paramātmā is eternal or Nitya-sākṣātkāra. It is ever all-pervasive and is not subject to the functioning of the sense-organs. Nāthamuni, the great Ācārya, describes the perceptual knowledge of the Lord as follows:

*Yo veti yugapat sarvaṃ pratyakṣeṇa sadā svataḥ  
Tam praṇamya harim śāstram nyāyatattvaṃ pracakṣmahe.*

“We bow to Hari and proceed to expound the Śāstra called Nyāya-Tattva—to Hari who sees directly, by perception, and of His own accord, all things simultaneously.”

The perception of the Nitya-sūris or Ever-free Angels also is always eternal since they are never under the grip of Karma.

The Anitya-sākṣātkāra or Non-eternal Perception is the perception of the ordinary human beings. It is non-eternal since their knowledge undergoes contraction and expansion according to the nature of karma that keeps them bound in Samsāra.

The perception of human beings is of two kinds: Yogic Perception and Non-yogic perception. Yogic perception does not stand in need of the instrumentality of sense-organs. The yogis are capable of cognising things with their mind alone since they have acquired great merit by means of the practice of Yoga or contemplation. Their perception is known as mental perception or Mānasa-sākṣātkāra which is beyond the reach of ordinary mortal

The Ayogic or Non-yogic perception is the knowledge of the ordinary human beings which comes into being as a result of the functioning of one or other of the five sense-organs. Since the organs are five, the perception also is of five kinds.

*Yatindra-mata-dipikā* (The light of the School of Śrī Rāmānuja) of Śrīnivāsa, which is an elementary treatise on Viśiṣṭādvaita classifies Perception as follows:

“Perception is of two kinds—inferior (Arvācīnam) and Superior (Anarvācīnam). The first again, is of two kinds Indriya sāpekṣam—sense-helped, and Indriya-anapekṣam—sense-unhelped.



The sense-unhelped is again twofold:

Svayam-siddham (Self-accomplished) and Divyam (Divine). Self-accomplished results from the practice of Yoga or deep meditation where as the divine is what is bestowed by God's Grace.

The Superior Perception (Anarvācīnam) does not look for the medium of sense-organs or Indriyas for help. Perception of Paraṁātmā, the Supreme Lord, Nityas or Eternally Free Souls, and Muktas are Freed Souls comes under this class.

Such is the Pratyakṣa, the first Instrument of knowledge. Next we shall deal with the Nirvikalpaka-Savikalapaka pattern of Perception and the theory of cognition as propounded in the School of Śrī Rāmānuja.

#### 46. *Perception: Nirvikalpaka and Savikalpaka*

Perception or Pratyakṣa is the direct knowledge produced by the sense-organs contacting the external substances. After detailed investigation and enquiry the conclusion has been reached that there is a slight difference between the cognition of an object of a particular species for the first time and the subsequent cognition of the second, third and fourth objects of the same species. Because of this difference one is called *Nirvikalpaka Pratyakṣa* and the other *Savikalpaka Pratyakṣa*. Though these two kinds of Perception are accepted by all schools of thought, each holds its own view in regard to their nature refuting the views of others. The discussion will be baffling. Without entering into details we shall now deal with the two kinds of Perception—Nirvikalpaka (Indeterminate) and Savikalpaka (Determinate Perception).

It will be noticed that even when we look at an object for the first time, it is cognised by us as having some form (Rūpa) and some qualities (guṇa). This is called Nirvikalpaka Pratyakṣa or Indeterminate Perception; because in this cognition, our knowledge is restricted to that one object before us and to the qualities that inhere in it. At that moment there is no thought in our mind whether there are other objects similar to that and belonging to that species. That the qualities do appear along with the object

even in this first cognition (i.e. Nirvikalpaka Pratyakṣa) has to be accepted since, if it is knowledge it is always experienced in the following form—‘this is thus’ (Idam ittham). The term ‘this’ refers to the object cognised, and ‘thus’ to the qualities and form that are inseparably connected with it.

It is an undisputed fact that in Savikalpaka Pratyakṣa or Determinate Perception also which perceives the second or third object of that class, that object is cognised along with its specific form and qualities. The difference between the two perceptions lies in this fact that in the former (i.e. Nirvikalpaka) only that one object is cognised whereas in the latter (i.e. Savikalpaka) the thought that the object is similar to the one that was seen already and therefore the object is one of the several objects belonging to that particular species. Thus whether the perception is Indeterminate (Nirvikalpaka) or it is Determinate (Savikalpaka), an object is cognised as being invariably qualified by some inseparable attributes, but never as a mere something devoid of form or qualities. But there are some who hold the view that in the Nirvikalpaka, the object only figures without its attributes, and in the Savikalpaka the object is cognised along with its attributes. This is not correct, for as stated before the form of knowledge with reference to an object is always as ‘this is thus’—i.e. ‘this object as being possessed of such and such qualities’ and never as ‘this’ only without any attribute.

There is another school which holds a different view as follows: in Nirvikalpaka the object, its qualities and the relationship between the two are seen severally, but as not mutually related. But in Savikalpaka both of them are cognised as mutually connected—the object as the substrate (Viśeṣya) and the qualities as attributes (Viśeṣaṇa). This view also will be found to be incorrect. For when the substance and the qualities that inhere in it are cognised, their relationship also will be perceived. Relationship means a connection. As such it presupposes the existence of two things which are related. Since the object, its qualities and their relationship figure in perception, and since relationship relates to two things mutually connected, it is not right to say that at any time the three things appear unconnected.

Thus Pratyakṣa or Perception, in whatever form it may be, is the first means by which we cognise the objects outside. When we

realize that we have a knowledge of something, there are three things in it—the knower, the known and the function of knowing. For instance in the form of knowledge 'I know a flower', 'I' is the knower—the agent who knows; 'flower' is the object known and 'know' indicates the act of knowing. The knowledge produced is said to be always true unless there is something to the contrary and makes it erroneous.

This leads us to the Theory of Khyātis or Apprehensions in regard to which again there are different views. And that will be discussed presently.

#### 47. Theory of Apprehension (*Khyāti-vāda*)

We have read that just as a Luminous object and its luminosity are found to coexist, so do the Ātmā and its attributive knowledge (Dharma-bhūta-jñāna). The Ātmā, which is a luminous object is the static aspect and its luminosity or knowledge is the dynamic aspect of the same being of consciousness. All kinds of knowledge are self-valid inasmuch as they grasp and reveal their corresponding objects as they are, and as they are conducive to life; and when they are not so, it is due to extraneous factors. Even the erroneous cognition of Sukti-Rajta (shell-silver illusion) is essentially not invalid since it grasps something that does exist there. It is only the presence of certain defects in the vision of the causal collocation of vision that leads to the invalidity of that cognition whereby it is called illusion. This self-validity of knowledge is produced by the same causal collocation that produces that knowledge. Therefore self-validity is born by itself and also cognised by itself. So validity is fundamental and intrinsic, and no argument is needed to establish it. Invalidity is accidental and extrinsic, being caused by factors outside knowledge.

This illusion can arise only in the Jīvātmā. His attributive knowledge (Dharma-bhūta-jñāna) admits the traits of untruth since he is under the impact of Saṃsāra and all that it stands for. But the svarūpa-jñāna (or knowledge in the form of the essential nature) of Jīvātmā is ever shining even as that of the Paramātmā is self-shining. Unlike in the case of the Jīvātmā, the attributive knowledge of Paramātmā is not open to defects and His cognition is always right knowledge or Pramā.

It will be pertinent to raise a question here and answer it—if all knowledge is said to be right knowledge and therefore valid, how are we to explain the occurrence of illusion in the world and how to explain our experience of things being true or untrue, real or unreal, right or wrong? *Pramā* or *Pramiti* (i.e., right knowledge) is the knowledge of reality as it is and that leads to successful activity on the part of the knower. It is distinguished from erroneous cognition which does not end in such successful activity. It must be understood at the outset that in regard to the illumination of an object there is no difference between *Pramā* (Right knowledge) and *Apramā* (False knowledge). But right knowledge differs from erroneous cognition in respect of the difference of the volitional and emotional aspects of the perceiver's personality, who is under the domination of Karma. Therefore the distinction between right knowledge and wrong knowledge is only relative, and this obtains only in the case of the knowledge of the knowers who are imperfect and deficient on account of *Karma*. The erroneous cognition of an object is not sublated by the right knowledge that comes later; because the first cognition shows some aspect of the object, and the subsequent cognition manifests some other aspect which was not shown by the first cognition. Thus what was an incomplete picture in the first cognition becomes complete in the second. When the souls in bondage are released from *karma*, and attain the state of perfection, their knowledge also blossoms in all its self-luminous and self-valid nature. Thus there is no possibility of illusion in them at that time.

This is the conclusion that is arrived at by our Ācāryas after a careful consideration of all the other theories on this point and that is given expression to by Śrī Rāmānuja in his *Śrībhāṣya* while discussing the various theories regarding erroneous apprehensions or Khyātis. He says in conclusion:

*Yathārtham sarva-vijñānam iti veda-vidām matam,  
Śruti-smṛtibhyassarvasya sarvātmatva-pratītiḥ.*

“The opinion of those who know the Vedas is that all knowledge is real, because according to Śrutis and Smṛtis everything may become manifest in the form of every other thing.” That is to say—all the perceptual knowledge including that

which goes by the name of illusion in the world is right knowledge. This theory goes by the name of *Sat-Khyati* or *Yathārtha-khyati* (i.e., True apprehension). But it is coupled with a non-apprehension (*Akhyāti*) of some aspect of the object perceived. Finally the Viśiṣṭādvaitic view is *Akhyāti-samvalita yathārtha-khyāti*.

This topic has been dealt with in great detail by Śrī Vedānta Deśika in his work *Tattvamukta-kalāpa* and in its commentary *Śarvārtha-Siddhi*, written by himself. He mentions several schools which hold different views on this point regarding the manifestation of things to consciousness. They are:

1. *Ātma-Khyāti* or Idealism of the Yogācāras, a branch of the school of Buddhism.
2. *Asat-khyāti* or Nihilism of the Mādhyamikas, another branch of Buddhism.
3. *Akhyāti* of the Mīmāṃsakas.
4. *Aburvācabīkya-khyāti* of the Philosophy of Advaita.
5. *Anyathā-Khyāti* of the school of Nyāya.

In spite of all the arguments and the counter arguments all of them have to accept *Anyathā-khyāti*—the presentation of something other than what is present as the real core of erroneous cognition. In *Ātma-khyāti* there is the presentation of extramental objects instead of the ideas; in *Asat-Khyāti* it is the presentation of the Sat for the Asat; in *Akhyāti*, the characteristics of one thing appears as the characteristics of another object. In *Anirvachanīya-khyāti* an indefinable and non-existent object appears as existent.

In *Yathārtha Khyāti* there is the presentation of the comparatively smaller elements of silver instead of the greater elements of the shell. At first sight when the smaller elements alone are perceived, it is taken for silver. In the subsequent cognition when the greater elements of the shell in the same object are grasped, the object is cognised as shell. The activity of the percipient to appropriate it to himself is arrested at first sight; for he realizes the silver element that is in it is too small to be of any use.

As the study of the various Khyātis will be interesting and informing, we shall deal with them before proceeding to the other Pramānas or Instruments of knowledge like Anumāna and Sabda.

#### 48. *Khyātis—Kinds of Apprehensions*

There are five different theories in regard to the manifestation of things to consciousness. The five theories are: (1) Ātma-khyāti, (2) Asat-khyāti, (3) Akhyāti, (4) Anirvacanīya-khyāti and (5) Anyathā-khyāti.

1. *Ātma-khyāti* is the Theory of Idealism propounded by the Yogācāra School of Buddhism. According to this school Vijñāna or Consciousness is the only Reality (Tattva). What becomes manifest to consciousness is merely the idea and the world does not exist. It is only the Vijñāna that appears to our eyes in the form of the objects of the world—some as subject, some as object and some as instruments of knowledge. All these things are superimposed upon that Vijñāna or Consciousness, which alone has an existence. This view is against all human experience. It is not mind, but the extra-mental object that is cognised in our daily experience as pot, cloth etc. Again there is a self-contradiction when the Yogācāras, the followers of this School say, that consciousness or idea alone has an existence and the other things do not, and at the same breath talk of two different things—idea and the super-imposed objects. This theory can come under the Theory of Anyathā-khyāti (one thing appearing as another) since there is the presentation of extra-mental objects in the Consciousness instead of the idea.

2. *Asat-khyāti* Nihilism is the theory of the followers of the Mādhyamika School of Buddhism. They declare that 'Śūnya' is the Reality (Tattva). Nothing really exists—neither Vijñāna or Consciousness, nor objects of the world. What becomes manifest to consciousness is mere Non-existence. The Asat or Non-existence appears as Sat (something that exists). They have to grant an Asat that appears in the cognition and also a pramāṇa that shows the Asat as Sat. If they do not accept the Pramāṇa, they cannot establish anything since it is the means of doing it. If they accept a Pramāṇa over and above the Asat, that goes against their pet theory that nothing exists except Asat (Non-existence). This

theory is not convincing. Again this also can be brought under the class of *Anyathā-khyāti* since *Asat* appears as *Sat*.

3. *Akhyāti* is the Theory which is upheld by the *Mīmāṃsakas*. According to them, what becomes manifest to consciousness is the Non-apprehension (*Akhyāti*) of the difference between two things, since the characteristic of one object appears as the characteristic of another, and two apprehensions appear as one. When a person takes a mother-of-pearl or shell for silver, his experience is in this form: 'this is silver'. Here the object that is perceived by the eye is really the shell, referred to as 'this'. But by the lustre in it which is common to mother-of-pearl and silver, he is reminded of the silver which is not before his eyes and which is not an object of perception. Therefore in this cognition, 'this is silver', there is the *Pratyakṣa* or Perception of the object (here shell) as well as the *Smṛti* (Memory) of another object, namely silver. Hence it is a case of Non-apprehension of the difference (*Bheda-agraha*) between two objects—the shell that is perceived and the silver that is recollected. The knowledge of the shell merely as an object coupled with the memory of silver and with the non-apprehension of the difference between the two—the shell and the silver—induces a person to go near the object for appropriating it. Since the person feels that he perceives silver, it is not correct to say that he recollects silver. So this theory also is not satisfactory. Further, this can also be classified under *Anyathā-Khyāti* as the attribute of one (silver in the shop) appears as the attribute of another (the shell before the eye).

4. *Anirvacanīya-khyāti* is the theory that is propounded by the *Advaitins*. The shell-silver-illusion is said to be due to *Avidyā* which is given the name of *Sad-asad-anirvacanīya*. To explain: let us take the case of a person who erroneously apprehends silver in the mother-of-pearl or shell. In this case, the object of perception is shell, and silver is not there; nor is it the silver in the shop, since the sense-organ eye is not in contact with it at that time and therefore it is not an object of perception. Nor can the apprehension be said to be a recollection of silver since the experience is that it is perceived as silver by the eye. To avoid this difficulty, the *Advaitins* say that a peculiar silver is created at that moment in the shell by the powerful *Avidyā*—a silver which is not the same as the silver generally known to all. The apprehension of

silver is said to be *sad-asad-anirvacanīya*—something indefinable since it is neither *sat*, nor *asat*. It is not '*sat*' or existent, because it is negated by the subsequent cognition that it is not silver, but only shell. Thus it is not like Brahman which alone is *Sat* and which is never negated by anything. Nor is the silver '*asat*' (absolutely non-existent) since it is cognised. *Asat* is something which cannot be apprehended at any time. For example, the hare's horn is '*asat*' and is never an object of experience. Since the silver in the shell is an object of apprehension, it cannot be called '*asat*' like the hare's horn; since it is sublated by a subsequent cognition that it is not silver, it cannot be called as '*Sat*' like Brahman which is the only *Sat* and which has no sublation at any time by anything. As it is undefinable either as *asat* or *Sat*, this theory goes by the name of *Anirvacanīya-khyāti*. This conclusion is not convincing. If an object is not *Sat* (existent), it must be *asat* (non-existent); and if it is not *asat*, it must be *sat*. To say it is neither the one nor the other does not stand to reason. Moreover if the indefinable something appears as '*sat*', it is a clear case of one object appearing as another, *Anyathā-khyāti* and a new theory need not be adumbrated.

5. *Anyathā-khyāti* is the theory propounded by the *Naiyāyikas* in regard to erroneous apprehensions. What happens according to this theory is the apprehension of an object as other than what it actually is. For example, in the shell-silver-illusion, silver is cognised as being present instead of the shell. As the object is really the shell, there is no silver before the eyes. But the mind recollects the past impressions of silver on account of the similarity of lustre in the shell and that of the previously perceived silver. According to the *Naiyāyikas*, *Pramā* (Right knowledge) and *Apramā* (False knowledge) are two different things produced respectively by the absence or presence of defects in the common causal collocation of knowledge. One object, namely shell, is cognised as another object namely silver and therefore it is really *Anyathā-khyāti*.

The scope of this theory of error namely *Anyathā-khyāti* is so all-embracing that it can safely be said that all the theories of error must have *Anyathā-khyāti* or the representation of something other than what is present as the real core of erroneous cognitions. It can be seen that *Anyathā-khyāti* is the under-lying



principle in Asat-khyāti in the sense of the presentation of the Sat for the Asat; in Ātma-khyāti in the sense of the presentation of the extra-mental objects instead of the ideas; in Akhyāti in the sense of the presentation of the attributes of something as those of some other; and lastly in Anirvacanīya-khyāti in the sense of the presentation of appearance instead of reality.

But as the Anyathā-khyāti cannot afford perfect satisfaction, Viśiṣṭādvaita modifies it to a certain extent and propounds the Theory of Sat-khyāti or Yathārtha-khyāti qualified by Akhyāti and thus explains the true nature of all the erroneous apprehensions that we come across daily in our life.

### 49. *Sat Khyāti*

(*Reality of Apprehensions*)

Perception is the most important of the Pramāṇas or Instruments of knowledge in regard to the cognition of the objects of the world. It is said to be always true. But there are certain perceptual cognitions which appear to be false and are therefore called illusions. The contradiction has got to be explained. Different schools of Philosophy have different views on this point which are known as Khyātis in general. But one aspect that is common to all of them is the cognition of one thing as another which goes by the name of 'Anyathā-Khyāti'. Viśiṣṭādvaita has its own explanation for this phenomenon of illusion. Its basic view is that all cognitions are right knowledge and no cognition can be deemed as illusion. This theory, which is known as Sat-khyāti or Yathārtha-Khyāti, is not the result of mere reasoning or imagination, but is based on the teaching of the Upaniṣads with reference to the creation of the world. We shall now deal, in some detail, with this.

The Cāndogya Upaniṣad, in particular, while describing the first creation, speaks of a process called Trivṛtkaraṇa or Tripartition. The Upaniṣad declares that Brahman, referred to here as 'Sat' was the only thing that existed before creation. It willed, "I shall become many and for that purpose I shall be born." Then it created non-sentient Tattvas (Acetana Tattvas) ending with Fire, Water and Earth, which are called respectively as Tejas, Ap and

Anna, in other words Agni, Jala and Pṛthvī. This is known as the Primary Creation or Samaṣṭi Sṛṣṭi. These three Bhūtas while separate, were wholly unable to create beings, and so they had to be intermixed to bring about what is known as Secondary Creation or Vyaṣṭi Sṛṣṭi. So Brahman willed as follows: "Of them I shall make each a compound of the three Elements." This process of intermixture is given the name of Trivrit-karaṇa or Tripartition. By this each one of the three Elements (viz. Fire, Water and Earth) is so manipulated as to possess the character of all the characters of all the three Elements of Fire, Water and Earth. After this tripartition, that Element (Bhūta) which goes by the name of Fire will have fifty per cent of the Element Fire in it, twenty-five per cent of the Element of Water and twenty-five per cent of Earth. That which is Water will have fifty per cent of Water, twenty-five per cent of each of the other two elements, Fire and Earth. In the same way that which is called Earth after tripartition will have fifty per cent of Earth, and twenty-five per cent of each of the other two Elements, viz. Fire and Water in it. Though every one of all the three Elements (Bhūtas) has in it parts of the other two Elements besides a part of its own self, it is known by the name of one particular Element, because that particular Element preponderates over the other two Elements. For instance, that Element is called Earth in the composition of which the element of Earth preponderates over the other two Elements of Fire and Water. (Earth—one half, Fire one quarter and Water—one quarter.)

In this connection we must also acquaint ourselves with another process called Pañcikaraṇa or Quintuplication, that is, the intermixture of the five Elements. *Cāndogya Upaniṣad* mentions that three Bhūtas,—Fire, Water and Earth—were created. But *Taittirīya* and other Upaniṣads declare that Pañca-Bhūtas or Five Elements were created—Ether and Air (Ākāśa and Vāyu) over and above the Three. Then for the purpose of secondary creation (Vyaṣṭi Sṛṣṭi), they had to be intermixed; and this intermixture of the Pañca-Bhūtas is known as Pañcī-karaṇa. In this process, one half of each element will be composed of itself, and the other half will comprise equal parts of the other four Elements. Thus after Pañcikaraṇa, the Element of Earth (Pṛthvī) will have in it one half of earth,  $\frac{1}{8}$  part each of the other four Elements, viz. Water, Fire, Air and Ether (Jala, Agni, Vāyu and Ākāśa). Each Bhūta gets a

particular name because of the preponderance of that particular element in it as contrasted with the smaller parts of other elements. The composition of the other four elements is effected in the same way.

Thus everything in the world contains every other thing in the world. By way of illustration, the Upaniṣad says that Fire contains within itself Water and Earth. It declares that the red colour in fire is the colour of the element of Fire (Tejas or Agni), the white colour in fire is the colour (of the element) of Water, and the black (colour in fire) is the colour (of the element) of Earth. Since the tripleness of form is shown by the Upaniṣad itself in regard to fire, this is true of all Bhūtas (Elements) as well as of things that have been produced out of them.

Thus it is on the authority of the Veda that Viśiṣṭādvaita propounds the theory of Sat-Khyāti or Yathārtha-Khyāti according to which all knowledge is real. We shall now proceed to explain the correctness of this theory with regard to some of the experiences in the world which appear to be illusory. First let us take the Shell-silver-illusion—(Śukti-Rajata-Jñāna). Silver is classified under the element of Fire or Tejas, and shell or mother-of-pearl under that of Earth. As a part of Tejas exists in Pṛthvī after Tripartition, silver has its existence in the shell, but comparatively in a small proportion. Under normal circumstances the preponderating part alone is grasped in an object by the sense-organ. So the shell is cognised as such by the eye generally. Sometimes on account of some defect in the sense of sight, the shell-part fails to be cognised and the silver-part alone of the shell is apprehended. Then a person in quest of silver goes to take it in obedience to the volition of the mind. When the defect disappears and the shell-part thereby is cognised, he concludes it is not silver and his activity in regard to silver also ceases. The perception of silver, however small it may be, in the shell in the first cognition is real since there is some silver part in the shell which was seen. Therefore this perception is called Sat-Khyāti or Yathārtha-Khyāti. But at that time, the shell-part of it though comparatively greater, was not apprehended due to some defect. Therefore there is Akhyāti or Non-apprehension as well. Thus when a person mistakes a shell for silver, we have to grant the existence of two kinds of apprehensions or Khyātis, namely Sat-Khyāti and

Akhyāti. Hence the correctness of the view of Śrī Rāmānuja that it is a case of Sat-Khyāti qualified by Akhyāti (Akhyāti-samvalita-Sat-Khyāti). Here are two perceptions: one sees silver in the object and the other perceives shell in the same. Of the two, the former is nullified and the latter persists as the nullifier. The distinction between the two is not due to the perception of what exists and of what does not exist, but is with reference to the predominance of one element or other which does exist. So the statement that everything is everything else is true in the theory of Śrī Rāmānuja.

### 50. *The Reality of Dreams, Mirage etc.*

According to the School of Viśiṣṭādvaita the cognition of silver in the mother-of-pearl or shell is a perception that is true, and not illusory as is generally believed. The view of Śrī Rāmānuja with regard to dreams will appear very strange to all of us who are of the opinion that dreams are not true. In our everyday life our experience seems to be that dreams are false. For instance a man sees in a dream that he is the recipient of a large amount of money and feels happy that he has become rich. But on waking up he finds that there is no money with him and he is as poor as before. So he concludes it was a mere dream and dreams are not true. But Śrī Rāmānuja, on the authority of the Upaniṣads, declares that dreams are as much a reality as wakeful experiences and they are the result of the good or evil deeds of men as all their actions are.

Here is the Mantra in the *Bṛihadāranyaka Upaniṣad* which reveals the true nature of dreams:

[Na tatra rathā na rathayogā na panthāno bhavanti, atha rathān rathayogān pathaḥ sṛjate. Na tatra ānandā mudāḥ pramudo bhavanti, atha ānandān mudāḥ pramudāḥ sṛjate. Na tatra veśāntāḥ puṣkariṇyaḥ sṛvantyo bhavanti, atha veśāntāḥ puṣkariṇyaḥ sṛvantyaḥ sṛjate, sa hi kartā.]

“In that condition of dream, there are no chariots, no horses to be yoked, and no roads (to travel). But He creates the chariots, the horses to be yoked and the roads. There is no pleasure, no joy and no happiness; but He creates pleasure, joy and happiness. (Pleasure comes from the sight of a desirable thing, joy from its possession, and happiness from its use.) There, there are no

puddles, no lakes and no rivers; but He creates the puddles, the lakes and the rivers. Indeed He is the creator." (6-3-10).

This passage teaches that all those things seen and experienced at the time of dreaming are not capable of being perceived or experienced by all persons other than the dreamer. The Lord creates such things to be seen only by that particular dreaming person. The Lord is capable of making such a unique creation since His powers are wonderful and He always wills the truth. Though the Jivātmā or the individual soul is the dreamer, he cannot be the creator of the things in the dream for two reasons: firstly in a state of sleep his external sense-organs (*Bahir-indriyas*) are in a state of rest and are not working. When they are not active, the Jivātmā cannot create such things. Secondly certain dreams are agreeable and some are frightful to him. If he were the creator, he will create only agreeable things and will not certainly bring into existence disagreeable and frightful things. Therefore the objects in the dream are created by the Lord Who is possessed of such unique power as to create things that are seen only by the dreamer and that also come to an end after a specified particular time. So the objects in the dream have an existence and are real, not illusory, as we usually think.

Again there are some special kinds of dreams: a dreamer experiences that he goes to another country, that he is anointed as a king there, that his head is cut off and so on. As the man is sleeping in an inner apartment, it cannot be said that the man goes out. But these things are possible in consequence of the creation of a body similar in all respects to the sleeping body. The dreamer does not perceive the difference between the sleeping body and the newly created body in which he has the dream experiences that are the result of his good and bad deeds. Thus in the dreamy state also there is real knowledge coupled with some non-apprehension.

There are some other experiences which can be similarly explained, for instance the apprehension of the yellow conch (*Śaṅkha*). The normal colour of the conch is white; but the eye of a person, suffering from jaundice, perceives it to be yellow. At the same time the eye of another man free from jaundice perceives it as white. How can the perception of yellow conch be right when the conch is white and it is perceived as such by other men?

Here is the *explanation*: the rays of the jaundiced eye get combined with bilious substance in the eye and fall upon the conch. The conch is white; but the whiteness is not apprehended since it is overpowered by the yellow colour belonging to the bile. Therefore the conch is perceived as yellow like a conch that is covered with a coat of gold. The bilious substance and its yellow colour are so subtle that they cannot be apprehended by the bystanders. But by him who is afflicted with biliousness due to jaundice, they are, in spite of their being subtle, apprehended clearly since they have proceeded from his own eyes and therefore close to him. Though they may be at a distance they are perceived by the ocular rays as they possess that peculiar power which is due to their having apprehended them in close proximity.

The appearance of a crystal gem as red by the side of a china-rose is the next instance to be considered. The crystal gem is white and when it lies close to a china-rose it is apprehended as red, because its natural colour is over-powered by the red colour of that flower. Although the coloured brilliance of the china-rose radiates in all directions, it is apprehended with great clearness only when it is in association with a transparent substance (like the crystal gem) and not when in association with other substances like stone or wall. Thus the redness of the crystal gem is capable of being established as real by perception.

The appearance of water in a desert during midday, that is, mirage is the next case to be considered in this connection. In the hot sun, water appears to exist in the desert when it is not there. If one perceives water there, that is also right knowledge. The doctrine of Tripartition propounded in the *Cāndogya Upaniṣad* (or that of quintuplication propounded in other Upaniṣads) teaches that every one of the five elements has in it parts of other elements also. So water is always present in fire, earth and other elements. But at the time of the perception of the mirage, on account of some defect in the eye the elements of fire and earth are not perceived while there is the apprehension of water alone and this defect itself is due to the influence of *adriṣṭa* (or some unseen agency). So in the case of the mirage also, there is right knowledge as far as the perception of water is concerned and non-apprehension in regard to the other elements there. That the *adriṣṭa* determines why one person perceives incorrectly, and not

others, and why he does so at one place and at one time and in regard to one thing only, and not in all places, at all times and in regard to all things has got to be accepted. Otherwise the alternative will be that all persons will perceive incorrectly in all places, at all times and in regard to all things, or there will be no misperception at all.

Next we shall take a few more cases of perceptions that are believed to be illusory and explain how they also are real.

### *51. The Reality of Cognitions that appear Illusory*

That all perceptions are based upon reality is the final view of Viśiṣṭādvaita. This was established with the help of a few illustrations like the shell-silver-cognition, yellow conch and the mirage. Now we shall proceed to give a few more illustrations before we pass on to the next topic.

When a fire-brand is swung round rapidly, it appears that there is a wheely fire. This is usually considered as an illusion since actually there is no wheely fire. But Viśiṣṭādvaitins declare that cognition also is true; and this is how they substantiate their statement. When the fire-brand is whirled round quickly, it touches all points of the circle in quick succession. The eye of the on-looker too with equal rapidity cognises it going in a circle. Therefore the apprehension of the circle is true. But there is no apprehension of the interspaces between any two successive positions of the fire-brand in the circle owing to the rapid motion of the fire-brand and its consequent association with all points of the circumference. The case is very much like the perception of a real wheel. But there is this difference that in the case of the wheel no interspaces are apprehended, because there are none; while in the case of the fire-brand they are not apprehended owing to the rapidity of the movement. It is therefore stated that the perception of the wheely fire is based upon reality.

The next example is the perception of one's own face in a mirror which is likewise true. When a person stands before a mirror and looks at it, the visual rays proceeding from the eye first fall upon the mirror and perceive it. Since the mirror has a polished surface, the visual rays are turned back and they fall upon

the face, and perceive it. Thus there is the cognition of both the mirror and the face, though one after the other, mirror first and the face next. But the face is seen in the mirror, because the intervening space between the mirror and the face is not cognised owing to the rapidity of the movement of the visual rays that proceed from the eye fall on the mirror and are turned back so as to fall on the face. Therefore there is right cognition (Yathārtha Khyāti) as far as the perception of the mirror and the face is concerned, and non-apprehension (Akhyāti) in regard to the intervening space between the mirror and the face.

Another instance is the so-called illusion relating to directions in space. When a person mistakes one direction for another, as when a person thinks the east to be where the west is, that is also right knowledge, for all the four directions, namely, east, west, south and north exist in the same place and he has cognised only the east out of the four. But a particular place is called east in relation to an object that remains west of it or it is called west in relation to an object lying east of it. So when a person cognises a particular direction as east, he perceives one only out of all the directions in a particular place due to *adrṣṭa* (some unseen agency). And it is also because of that *adrṣṭa* there is non-apprehension of the other directions existing in that space. Therefore here also the perception is based upon reality.

The last phenomenon that we shall consider in this connection is the perception of two moons by a person. When a person, whose eye is affected by the disease *Timira* by name or whose eye is pressed by the finger, looks at the moon, he perceives two moons in the sky. When there is only one moon, the perception of two moons must be an illusion. 'How can it be called a true cognition?' is the question. The answer is as follows: When there is a defect in the eye because of the disease *Timira* or because of the pressure of a finger upon the eye, it gives rise to double or even multiple vision. This is due to the fact that the visual rays proceeding from the eye are split owing to the defect and consequently a division is made in the movement of the rays. Thus a duality is caused in the apparatus intended to help the apprehension of the moon. When the apparatus of cognition is different, the objects cognised will also be different. Thus a duality of apparatus or means, which are independent of each other, becomes the cause of the two



apprehensions of the (one) moon. Of the two means, one perceives the moon as being in its own place. The other follows a slightly different direction because of its being somewhat oblique in its movement. It first apprehends the place close to the moon, and then cognises the moon, but without reference to its place. Thus the moon is perceived by two means—viz., the two sets of visual rays—as being connected with two places. Since there is a duality in the means of apprehension, there is a duality in the objects apprehended, namely the forms of the moon. As the two forms of the moon are not recognised as one, the apprehension persists that there are two moons.

Though the eyes are two, both of them function as one means for the perception of things. Therefore in normal conditions there is the apprehension of only one object by both the eyes. But in regard to the apprehensions of two moons and the like, we have to assume from the effect produced that there must be a duality in the means. With reference to the apprehension of two moons, this duality of means is due to the splitting up of the visual rays proceeding from the eye on account of the presence of Timira or some other misleading cause in the eye. But if the misleading cause is removed, there will be only one means with the result that there will be the apprehension of only one object. Similarly when the eye is free from the defect, the moon will be apprehended as being connected only with one place. Thereby the knowledge arises that the moon is one and it is only in one place. Thus the duality of the means is due to the misleading cause in the eye; the duality of apprehensions is the result of the duality of the means; and the duality in the form of the moon is apprehended because of the duality of the apprehensions. Therefore the apprehension of two moons is real.

And thus it is the settled conclusion of the School of Viśiṣṭādvaita that all cognition is true. It has been already explained that even in erroneous cognition, as in the case of shell-silver-illusion, yellow conch and others, the cognition is true. But the error creeps in as the cognition is partial and not complete. When the fuller cognition comes, it sublates the object of the partial cognition and presents the object as it is in full. So a thing is sublated not because it is illusory, but because its apprehension was incomplete.

After an elaborate treatment of all these points in *Śrī Bhāṣya* the commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*, Śrī Rāmānuja winds up the discussion with the following note with which we shall also conclude this topic:

“Since we acknowledge the validity of the different means of knowledge known as Perception, Inference and Scripture, and since we accept—as vouched for by sacred tradition—(scripture) the Highest Brahman Who is devoid of the least taint of evil Who is possessed of countless hosts of infinitely high and noble qualities, Who is omniscient and Who has an unfailing will,—what is there that we cannot prove or explain? Bhagavān, the Highest Brahman, creates all the worlds in order that the individual souls may have happiness or sorrow in accordance with their good or bad deeds. He creates object that will give pleasure, pain or neither when experienced. Of them some are common objects of experience to all; and others are objects of experience to some particular persons only. The later last only for a specified period of time and are to be experienced subject to various specific conditions. It is this distinction—viz. of things that are objects of common experience, and of things that are not so—which makes the difference between what is called ‘things sublated’ (bādhaka) and ‘things sublated’ (bādhya); and it does not mean that the former are real and the later unreal. For all things created by the Lord are real.”

Thus out of the threefold Instruments of Knowledge, Pratyakṣa (Perception), Anumāna (Inference) and Śabda (Scripture or Verbal Testimony), Pratyakṣa has been dealt with under various heads like Determinate and Indeterminate Perception, doubts, Misconceptions and erroneous Cognitions. Next we shall take up Anumāna (Inference).

## 52. *Anumāna* (Inference)

Pratyakṣa or Perception is the first of the three Instruments of knowledge (Pramāṇas) and it arises when there is the sense-object contact. So it is restricted to things that are in sight. We have seen that all that is and that can be perceived is Reality. There are also

things that are real even though they are out of sight. Knowledge of such things is acquired by other **Means of Knowledge** like *Anumāna* (or Inference) and *Śabda* (or Scriptural Testimony).

We shall now proceed to deal with *Anumāna* (Inference). Inference is based upon perceptual knowledge. Inference gives us the knowledge of a thing though we do not directly perceive it, through a mark that the thing possesses and that is perceived by us at the moment. For example let us take the case of a person who knows from experience that fire and smoke are invariably found together, i.e., they are concomitant. He goes to a mountain where he sees a cloud of smoke rising from its peak. He recollects the relation of smoke and fire. From the presence of the smoke on the peak, he infers that the fire also must be there. In this process, perception is restricted to the smoke that is before the eyes. Recollecting the concomitance of smoke and fire, he concludes that fire also must be there even though it is not perceived by him. This conclusion is inferential knowledge. Since this involves some mental process in addition to the perceptual knowledge, Inference cannot be classified under Perception and it must be accepted as a separate **Means of Knowledge**. Inference cannot be called memory since the inferential knowledge is in regard to a new object now that is not before our eyes (here fire). It is not the same as memory since the latter is restricted to the knowledge of things previously experienced.

Inference, according to some, is divisible into two kinds: (1) Inference for the sake of oneself, and (2) Inference for the benefit of another. Some are of the opinion (*Śrī Vedānta Deśika* is one of them) that all Inferences are for the sake of oneself since all of them are the result of one's own reflection and hence for one's own purpose. Inference is again classified under two heads: (i) Induction, and (ii) Deduction. Induction is the Inference of the general law from the observation of particular instances and Deduction is the Inference resting on the general to particular instances.

Inference generally consists of five members: (1) *Pratijñā* or Proposition; (2) *Hetu* or Reason; (3) *Udāharaṇa* or Example; (4) *Upanaya* or Application; and (5) *Nigamana* or Conclusion.

1. *Pratijñā* or Proposition is the sentence that indicates the subject, thus: 'The mountain has fire.' In this the mountain about which the fire is predicated is called '*Pakṣa*'—It is also known as the Subject or the Minor Term.

2. *Hetu* or Reason indicates the mark thus: 'Because it has smoke.' *Hetu* is also known by other terms:—*liṅga* or mark, *Sādhana* or Inferrant and Middle Term.

3. *Udāharaṇa* or Example indicates an example where concomitance between two things obtains. This is two-fold: *Anvaya* or Affirmative and *Vyatireka* or Negative, thus:

i. 'Where there is smoke there is fire, for example the kitchen'—this is an instance of the Affirmative Example. Kitchen is also called '*Sapakṣa*'—a place where the presence of the object to be inferred (i.e. fire) is not disputed, but accepted by all.

ii. 'Where there is no fire, there is no smoke, for example, the lake'. This is an instance of the Example of the Negative type. Lake is called '*Vipakṣa*'—a place where the non-existence of the object to be inferred is accepted without dispute.

4. *Upanaya* or Application is the sentence which refers Reason to the subject by a consideration of the Example. This is also two-fold like the Example, thus.

- i. Affirmative type—'The mountain has smoke.'
- ii. Negative type—'The mountain is not without smoke.'

5. *Nigamana* or Conclusion is the sentence which conclusively lays down what is to be inferred in the subject by means of the Reason. This is also two-fold, thus:

- i. Affirmative type—'Therefore the mountain has fire.'
- ii. Negative Type—'Therefore the mountain is not without fire.'

To recapitulate:

1. *Pratijñā*—'The mountain has fire.'
2. *Hetu*—'Because it has smoke.'
3. *Udāharaṇa*—'Where there is smoke there is fire, for example the kitchen' or 'where there is no fire, there is no smoke, for example the lake.'

4. Upanaya—‘The mountain has smoke’ or ‘The mountain is not without smoke.’

5. Nigamana—‘Therefore the mountain has fire’ or ‘Therefore the mountain is not without fire.’

These are the five members of the Syllogism which help us to arrive at the inferential knowledge. The Nyāya-school insists that all the five are necessary. The Mīmāṃsakas say that three will do, namely, Pratijñā, Hetu and Udāharaṇa. The Buddhists declare that Udāharaṇa and Nigamana are enough and the rest are superfluous. Śrī Vedānta Deśika is of opinion that importance need not be attached to the number of members in the syllogism; for the number may be more or less in accordance with the equipment of a person to understand the topic. The five-membered syllogism is meant for people of immature minds, the three-membered, for comparatively mature minds, and the two-membered for more mature minds.

In the process of Inference, Vyāpti or Concomitance of Sādhana (Inferant) and Sādhya (Inferred) plays an important part.

### 53. *Vyāpti* *Concomitance*

Indian Logic or Nyāya Śāstra has pursued the study of Inference to a very advanced state. The more advanced the treatment, the more difficult it is to understand. All systems of Indian Philosophy including the Viśiṣṭādvaita adopt much of what has been said by that School in regard to Inference while establishing their views. So it is necessary for us to understand some of the technical terms used by them when we are in the topic of Inference. Vyāpti or Concomitance is one such term which plays an important part in the process of Inference. So we begin with that.

Vyāpti is the concomitance or invariable coexistence of the Hetu or reason and the sādhya (or the object to be inferred). The Parāmarśa or Recollection of this Vyāpti helps us know things we do not see. Anusandhāna is the term used by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins in

the place of Parāmarśa. Anusandhāna or Recollection is the understanding of the natural laws and their application as observed in day to day life for acquiring the knowledge of objects that are out of sight.

To explain: from our experience we know, among the numerous objects in the world many are generally found together in space and time, for instance smoke and fire. But even among them one set has a wider sphere of existence while the other has a smaller one. As between smoke and fire, fire has got a wider sphere of existence than smoke. For example in a red-hot iron-ball, there is only fire, but no smoke. Since smoke is invariably found with fire, and never without it, we can say, 'wherever there is smoke, there is fire'. But we cannot say that 'wherever there is fire, there is smoke'; for, in a red-hot iron-ball fire alone exists and smoke does not. Therefore it is said that fire has got a wider sphere of existence and the smoke, smaller. The former, i.e., fire is called Vyāpaka or Pervader, and the latter, i.e., the smoke is called Vyāpya or Pervaded. The relation between the smoke and the fire—the Vyāpya and the Vyāpaka—is called Vyāpti or Concomitance and its recollection for purposes of Inference is Parāmarśa according to the Nyāya school and Anusandhāna according to Viśiṣṭādvaita. This Vyāpti implies an agreement in presence as well as in absence of the Vyāpya and Vyāpaka or *vice versa*. That is to say, wherever the Vyāpya is, there the Vyāpaka is; and wherever the Vyāpaka is not, there the Vyāpya is not. In the case of Inference of fire from smoke, smoke is the Vyāpya and it is the Hetu or the Reason; and fire is the Vyāpaka, also known by the term Sādhya or the thing that is inferred. The affirmative statement—where there is smoke, there is fire—is the agreement in presence; and the negative statement—where there is no fire, there is no smoke—is the agreement in absence. The former, i.e., the agreement in presence is called Anvayavyāpti and the latter, i.e., the agreement in absence is called Vyatireka-vyāpti.

Both these kinds of Vyāpti will become faulty when they are affected or circumscribed by a condition which is known as Upādhi, and the inference will be vitiated. Upadhi is defined as that condition which coexists with Sādhya (Inferred) and does not always coexist with the Hetu (or Reason). For example, when a

person tries to infer the existence of smoke from fire, his proposition will be in this form: 'The mountain has smoke, as it has fire'. It is here that the Upādhi or condition steps in. The conjunction of moist firewood is the Upādhi here. Wherever there is smoke, there is moist firewood. So Upādhi coexists with Sādhya or the thing to be inferred. But moist firewood is not found in a red-hot iron-ball. That is, it does not coexist with the Hetu or Reason. When a person proceeds to infer smoke from fire, he will fail; because there is at least one place where fire exists without smoke i.e., in a red-hot iron-ball. But if the Hetu is qualified by the condition, the inference will be correct. Instead of saying 'there is smoke, because there is fire', we must say 'there is smoke, because there is fire in conjunction with moist firewood'. Therefore Vyāpti or concomitance is that relation between the Hetu and Sādhya or Vyāpya and Vyāpaka which is not affected by condition (Upādhi).

Thus Hetu or Reason has a very important place in Inferential knowledge. An Inference will be valid only when the Reason is correct. If the reason is defective, it will not lead to correct inferential knowledge. For instance, when a person infers fire from smoke, the inference will be valid, because the reason is correct. Suppose a person sees a column of dust at a distance. He mistakes it for smoke and proceeds to infer that there is fire. As the reason here is not correct, his inference will not be correct.

#### 54. Fallacy—Hetvābhāsa

Sometimes the arguments will be specious; that is they appear to be good reasons, but really are not so. Such specious reasons are called Hetvābhāsas or Fallacies. According to the Nyāya School, Fallacies are fivefold, thus:

1. Asiddha, or Futile;
2. Viruddha, or Contrary;
3. Anaikāntika or Discrepant;
4. Prakaraṇa-sama or Inconclusive; and
5. Bādhita or Contradictory.

1. Asiddha or Futile is that fallacy where a person adduces a reason which is not found in the Pakṣa, i.e., the place in which one wants to infer the presence of something. For example—'The Jīva

is eternal, because he is visible, like a jar.' In this proposition, 'being visible' is the Reason; but it is not found in Jīva, since he is beyond sense-perception. So it is that specious reasoning known as Asiddha.

2. Viruddha or Contrary is the name given to that Fallacy in which the reason is quite contrary to what we want to infer. For instance: 'Matter is eternal, because it is created, like time.' It is accepted by all that what is created is not eternal. But in this inference it is given as the reason for matter being eternal, which is therefore contrary.

3. Anaikāntika or Discrepant—When the Reason exists not only in the Pakṣa (Subject), but exists also in Sapakṣa or Example as well as in Vipakṣa Counter-example. For instance—'Sound is eternal, as it is an object of cognition, like Time.' This Inference is invalid, because not only things that are eternal are objects of cognition, but things that are not eternal also are objects of cognition. So the reason 'being an object of cognition' exists not only in the subject, but exists in objects with the contrary nature.

[In the syllogism, 'the mountain has fire, because it has smoke, like kitchen', the mountain where the presence of fire is under dispute is called Pakṣa or subject or Minor Term. That place where the presence of fire is accepted by all without dispute is called Sapakṣa or Example—here kitchen. Vipakṣa or Counter-example is that where it is accepted by all that fire does not exist—like lake.]

4. Prakaraṇa-sama (Inconclusive) is that fallacy where a counter-reason exists which proves the negative of that which is to be proved. Let us take the proposition—'God is eternal, for He is devoid of non-eternality.' There is Reason for proving the opposite also: 'God is non-eternal; as He is devoid of eternity.' So long as there is a counter-Inference like the latter, the former cannot be valid.

5. Bādhita or Contradictory is that specious Reason by which we want to prove something which has been already negated by Pratyakṣa or other stronger Means of knowledge. For instance—'Fire is cold, because it is a substance, like water.' This inference is



rendered futile by our sense-perception which shows beyond doubt that fire is hot.

So Inference, if it is to be correct, must be based on a Reason that is valid, and that is neither defective nor specious.

This Reason is again of two kinds:

- (i) *Anvaya-vyatirekī* and
- (ii) *Kevala-anvayī*.

(i) *Anvaya-vyatirekī* is that Hetu which can be shown to be concomitant with the Sādhyā in an Example (*Sapakṣa*) and absent with absence of Sādhyā in a Counter-example (*Vipakṣa*). This reason has the five-membered syllogism: for instance—

1. The mountain has fire;
2. because it has smoke.
3. Where there is smoke, there is fire, like the kitchen.
4. There is smoke in the mountain.
5. Therefore there is fire.

In this syllogism, the third member—‘where there is smoke, there is fire like the kitchen’—is an Affirmative Example which shows the presence of smoke and fire in one place. The Negative Example will be: ‘Where there is no fire, there is no smoke like the lake.’ This shows the absence of both the fire and smoke in one place. Therefore this reason called *Anvaya-Vyatirekī* has example not only for the coexistence of the Hetu and Sādhyā (smoke and fire), but also for the coexistence of the absence of Sādhyā and Hetu (fire and smoke).

(ii) *Kevala-anvayī* is the Reason for which there can be an example only for the coexistence of the Hetu and Sādhyā, but not for that of their absence. So it cannot have the Counter-Example (*Vipakṣa*) in the Syllogism:

- (1) Brahman is definable,
- (2) because it is an object
- (3) Whichever is an object can be defined, like a jar.
- (4) Brahman is an object.
- (5) Therefore Brahman is definable.

There is no counter-example for this.

The Nyāya School accepts a third kind of Reason also known as Kevala-vyatirekī, and for this they give an example where the negation of Sādhya coexists with the negation of Hetu. For there is no other place where the Hetu and Sādhya will be found to coexist and which can be given as the Example. The Kevala-vyatirekī or the Purely Negative syllogism they give is follows: Earth is different from other things, as it has smell.' The Vyatireka-vyāpti or the Negative concomitance for this is this: 'Where there is non-difference from other things, there is no smell, like water. Earth is the only element that has smell and it is the Pakṣa or the place where the Sādhya is to be inferred. Since there is no other object that has smell, they are not able to give an Anvaya-vyāpti or the Positive Concomitance thus: 'Where there is smell, there is non-difference from others.' Hence the Negative concomitance—non-existence of difference from others and non-existence of smell. Unless we know what is difference from others, we cannot know what is the non-difference. For unless we know an object, we cannot cognise the absence of the object. So the Kevala-vyatireka-vyāpti (the purely Negative concomitance) does not throw any light on the proposition. It cannot be argued that difference can be known since it exists in the Pakṣa—the Earth. For if it is known that it exists there, one need not take the trouble of proving it with the help of an Inference. Thus a Kevala-vyatirekī anumāna is an impossibility. Śrī Vedānta Deśika declares that it need not be accepted.

So far we have dealt with Inference which is the second of the three Means of knowledge. This only introduces us to the subject. We have not gone into details since it will be difficult to follow. For a more advanced study of the subject, we may refer the readers to the Anumāna chapter of *Nyāya-Parīśuddhi* and to the *Buddhiśāra* of *Tattvamuktākalapa*—both of them works of Śrī Vedānta Deśika.

## 55. Veda

### Śabda (Verbal Testimony)

Śabda or Verbal Testimony is the third and the last of the three Pramāṇas or Instruments of knowledge that are accepted by the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita. It is a separate Pramāṇa and

cannot be subsumed under *Pratyakṣa* or *Anumāna* since it reveals things that are beyond their range. *Pratyakṣa* or Perception is the first means of our acquaintance with the Universe and is restricted to the cognition of objects that exist outside and that come into contact with our sense-organs. Inference coming next, helps us to acquire a knowledge of the objects that are not before the eyes by a process of reasoning based upon the cognition of the objects that are invariably concomitant with the former and that are seen. For example, we infer the existence of fire which is not seen from the smoke that is seen and which is always associated with it. But there are yet other things which are beyond the scope of these two *Pramāṇas* (*Pratyakṣa* and *Anumāna*) and which can be known only from the *Śāstras*—(i.e.) *Śabda*, the third *Pramāṇa*. *Śabda* will show the object only to that person who knows its signification and in this it differs from Perception, which, like a lamp, manifests things indiscriminately whether one knows it or does not know it. Thus in Verbal Testimony, knowledge of the signification of the word is essential. *Śabda* is valid by nature even as Perception and Inference are. Invalidity, if any, of Verbal Testimony is extrinsic and is conditioned by external factors.

Generally the term '*Śabda*' is used in Philosophical Literature to denote Holy Word, Revelation or the Scriptures, that is, the Vedas. *Śabda* is defined as that instrument which produces the knowledge obtained from sentences non-uttered by the non-trustworthy (men).' This definition is perfect in regard to the Vedas since they are the traditional lore handed down by those who are worthy of confidence. They are '*āpauruṣeya*'—are not of human origin—, for they are not the spoken words of any human being. In fact they are not even God-made. Then how did they come into existence? Here is the reply: at the beginning of Creation, the Lord created *Brahmā*, the four-faced god and taught him the Vedas as they lay in His consciousness at the time of deluge. This is very much like the act of a teacher who, to teach his student, repeats from his memory the text of a poem which he has learnt before. Those, who hear him, including the disciple, may think that the teacher is the author of the poem, but it is not the fact. In the same way, the Lord did not originate the Vedas. He only repeated them as they were in the previous *Kalpa*. Therefore the Lord is not the author (*Vaktā*) of the Vedas, but only the Propounder (*Pravaktā*). Hence it is stated that the Vedas

are eternal. It means the form of words and their order are the same for all time, though every time a person repeats them, the words may come into existence and disappear.

Since the Vedas are not man-made, they are free from all defects that usually go with things of human origin. As the knowledge and power of human beings are limited, they are liable to err and their works are subject to imperfections and mistakes. The Vedas are always self-valid and they need not seek the help of other things to establish their validity. Therefore they are authoritative in all their entirety.

The Vedas are universal in their benevolence and are more affectionate and beneficent than a thousand mothers and fathers put together. They prescribe methods for realizing the varied ends of the different classes of people governed by their inherent nature in accordance with the preponderance of one or other of the three qualities—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Each one may choose whatever he likes according to his taste and ability. But a wise man must think and find out what is good for him amongst those that are prescribed; he should not indiscriminately run after all things that are found in the Vedas.

The advice of Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in *Bhagavad Gītā* is on identical lines:

*Yāvān artha udapāṇe sarvatas-samplutodake,  
Tāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ.*

*Bhagavad Gītā II-46*

[A man uses only as much water as he needs out of a reservoir abounding in water far beyond his demand, and not more. In the same way does a man of discrimination choose from the Vedic injunctions only those that pertain to him and that are conducive to his objectives.]

Hence it is said that though the Vedas in toto are authoritative, all the rules are not meant for all.

Though the Vedas are innumerable, it is said that they are four in number—R̥gveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda. The R̥gveda is in the form of Rik—verses in metrical form. Yajurveda is in prose. Sāmaveda comprises verses set to

music. Atharvaveda contains Mantras, both in the form of prose and verse. Each of these four Vedas has got several Śākhās or branches.

Each of these four Vedas consists of two parts. Pūrva-bhāga or the First Part known as Karma-kāṇḍa deals with Karma (or works) which is worship of God; and the Uttara-bhāga or the Second Part Jñāna-kāṇḍa by name treats of Brahman or God Who is the sole object of worship. Thus both the parts form a composite whole and they together constitute one Śāstra.

Each Veda is again threefold—Mantra, Artha-vāda and Vidhi. The Mantra portion explains the purpose (Artha) of Action. The Artha vāda constitutes the passages intended to stimulate effort conformable to injunctions laid down. Vidhi or Injunction is the text which enjoins one what is good (for one to do).

Thus the Instrument of Knowledge, Śabda, comprises in main the Vedas which are entirely authoritative. So are the Vedāṅgas or the Auxiliaries of the Veda and the Purāṇas.

### 56. *Vedāṅgas and Purāṇas*

Śabda Pramāṇa or the Instrument of Knowledge known as Verbal Testimony denotes chiefly the Vedas which are declared to be eternal (Nitya) and not of human origin (Apauruṣeya). The term is also used to include the Vedāṅga—a limb (for preserving the body) of the Vedas. The Vedāṅga comprises works which are auxiliary to, and even in some sense a part of the Veda. The object of the Vedāṅgas is to secure the proper pronunciation and correctness of the Text and the right employment of the Mantras at sacrifices as taught in the portion of the Veda, known as Brāhmaṇa which contains the Vidhis or Injunctions and Artha-vāda or Exegetical part of the Vedas.

Six subjects are usually enumerated as Vedāṅgas. And they are: (1) Śikṣā, (2) Candas, (3) Vyākaraṇa, (4) Nirukta, (5) Jyotiṣa, and (6) Kalpa!

(1) Śikṣā or Phonetics is the Science of proper articulation and pronunciation comprising the knowledge of letters, accents,

quantity, the use of the organs of pronunciation, and Phonetics generally, but especially the laws of Euphony peculiar to the Veda. The works known as Prātiśākhya come under the class of Śikṣā.

(2) Chandas is Prosody or Metrical Science which gives an exposition of the meters like Gāyatrī, Anuṣṭup, Triṣṭup etc.

(3) Vyākaraṇa is the Science of Grammar which deals with the rules of the correct formation of words and framing of sentences. The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Sage Pāṇini is the earliest available text in Grammar and Linguistic Analysis.

(4) Nirukta or Etymology is the etymological explanation of difficult and obscure words, especially those occurring in the Vedas. This branch is represented by Nirukta, a work of sage Yāsa.

(5) Jyotiṣa is a short tract on Astronomy—the Science of the course of the heavenly bodies and divisions of time resting thereon, which governs the study of the Vedas and the conduct of sacrifices enjoined therein.

(6) Kalpa is that Science which lays down the ritual and prescribes the rules for ceremonial and sacrificial acts.

The first and the second of these Vedāṅgas (Phonetics and Prosody) are intended to secure the correct reading or recitation of the Vedas, the third and the fourth (Grammar and Etymology) the understanding of it, and the fifth and the sixth (Jyotiṣa and Kalpa) its proper employment at sacrifices. The Vedas along with these six Vedāṅgas or Auxiliary Sciences are authoritative.

The term Śabda includes also those works which go by the name of Smṛtis, Itihāsas and Purāṇas. Smṛtis or Dharma Śāstras are codes of laws, religious or civil, as handed down originally by Manu, Yājñavalkya and other great legislators who are said to have been inspired and to have based their precepts on the Vedas and divine revelation. The laws they promulgated are called Smṛtis ('what is remembered') in contradistinction to Śruti or what is heard or revealed. The very essence of Smṛti is that it was

delivered from memory by human authors and not directly revealed. Smṛti expounds the law of Ācāra or Conduct, Vyavahāra or Transactions, Prāyaścitta or Atonement etc.

Itihāsa, which means 'Thus it was', comes under the class of Śabda' and it comprises the two great Epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. The former deals with the story of Śrī Rāma, a scion of the Solar Dynasty (Sūryavaṁśa) and the latter portrays the history of the Pāṇdavas who were the Kings of the Lunar Dynasty (Candravaṁśa).

Purāṇas or the Ancient Lore are the works of great sages like Vyāsa and Parāśara who are noted for the power of their penance and knowledge. In order to help the ordinary human beings who are not able to understand the Vedas, the sages have written the Purāṇas in which the obstruse ideas of the Vedas are elucidated with suitable illustrations and legends. The Purāṇa is said to possess Pañca-lakṣaṇa or five characteristics: (1) Sarga or the creation of the Universe, (2) Pratisarga or its destruction and renovation, (3) Vaṁśa or the genealogy of gods and human beings, (4) Manvantara or the period or age of the Manus who are said to be fourteen in number and who are the successive progenitors or Sovereigns of the Earth, and (5) Vaṁśa-anucharita or the History of the Kings of the Solar and Lunar dynasties.

The injunctions of the Vedas are said to be peremptory like the commands of an imperious master, and the method of poetry is like the winsome words of a loving sweetheart; whereas the method of presentation of ideas in the Purāṇas is like the persuasive words of a good friend. Though the Smṛtis, Itihāsas and Purāṇas are works of inspired sages and have their roots in the Vedas, they have to depend upon the latter for their validity unlike the Vedas which are themselves self-authoritative. Several rules have been prescribed to determine the authoritativeness of the Purāṇas.

### 57. *Purāṇas and Their Validity*

It is accepted by all that Śabda (here Śāstra) is the only means by which the knowledge of Brahman and other such supra-sensual objects can be acquired and that the Vedas as well as their six

auxiliaries known as the Vedāṅgas come under this category. It is difficult for ordinary human beings to understand the meaning of all the passages found in all the numerous recensions of the Vedas, who are able to know only a small part thereof and therefore amplification (Upabṛmhana) has necessarily to be effected in regard to the import of the Vedas. The sages, by the great power of their Yoga, know all the Vedas and their meanings, and also directly perceive the things constituting the truth of the Vedas. They are inspired beings and for the benefit of the humanity in general they elucidate the meanings of the Vedic passages in their works which are called Purāṇas and Itihāsas. What they say has its root in the Vedas and so their works also are accepted as authoritative.

The authors of the Purāṇas are after all human beings subject to the influence of the three guṇas of Prakṛti—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. So the authoritativeness of their works has got to be accepted with some reservation. For instance, what they say when the Sattvaguṇa is predominant in them will be in accordance with the revelation of the Vedas and therefore authoritative since the Sattvaguṇa is said to be conducive to the rise of correct knowledge. But there may be occasions when the Rajoguṇa or Tamoguṇa may preponderate in them and their sayings at that time will become vitiated by inaccuracy or ignorance. Such sayings will be at variance with the Vedas. The variation may be of two kinds—one, in regard to Anuṣṭāna or practice of rites, and the other with reference to the Realities or Tattvas. Of the two, the variation in regard to practice may be taken as an alternative to the one taught by the Vedas and therefore may be accepted as valid. But if the disagreement is in regard to the Realities—namely Paramātmā Jīvātmā and the like, their words will have to be rejected as invalid since there cannot be any variation in the Realities.

The Purāṇas are eighteen in number and there are as many Upa-purāṇas or Subsidiary Purāṇas. The eighteen Purāṇas usually reckoned are as follows: 1. Kūrma purāṇa, 2. Garuḍa purāṇa, 3. Bṛhan-nāradiya purāṇa, 4. Padma purāṇa, 5. Brahma purāṇa, 6. Brahmavaivarta purāṇa, 7. Brahmāṇḍa purāṇa, 8. Bhaviṣya purāṇa, 9. Bhāgavata purāṇa, 10. Matsya purāṇa, 11. Mārkaṇḍeya purāṇa, 12. Liṅga purāṇa, 13. Vāmana purāṇa, 14. Vāyu purāṇa,



15. Varāha purāṇa, 16. Viṣṇu purāṇa, 17. Śiva purāṇa and 18. Skānda purāṇa.

These Purāṇas are classified under three heads as Sāttvika purāṇa, Rājasa purāṇa and Tāmāsa purāṇa. Śrī Viṣṇu purāṇa and Śrī Bhāgavata purāṇa (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam), for instance, are said to be Sāttvika purāṇas and they are accepted as authoritative in toto, whereas the Purāṇas that come under the other two heads are not accepted like that. In the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems propounded by Kapila and Hiraṇyagarbha, only such parts as are in consonance with the Vedic thoughts are taken as valid and the other part, which differs from the Vedas, is rejected as being unauthoritative.

But how to determine which of these Purāṇas is Sāttvika and which Rājasa and so on? Our Ancients who abide by the teachings of the Vedas, have made a thorough and dispassionate study of all the Purāṇas and have laid down rules with the help of which we can find out the nature of a Purāṇa and accept it if it is Sāttvika, and reject it if it is not. Śrī Sudarśana Sūri, the Author of the famous work, *Śrutaparakāśikā*, a commentary on *Śrī Bhāṣya* has discussed this point in great detail in his work, and given his conclusions which are indisputable. We shall give below in brief what he has said in regard to the authoritativeness of Viṣṇu Purāṇa which was the topic under discussion there.

Firstly the Purāṇas themselves give us a clue about the nature of a Purāṇa, if it is Sāttvika, Rājasa or Tāmāsa. Matsya Purāṇa, for instance, says:—

*Agneḥ śivasya mātmyam tāmaseṣu prakīrtyate,  
Rājaseṣu ca mātmyam adhikam brahmaṇo viduḥ  
Sāttvikeṣvatha kalpeṣu mātmyam adhikam hareḥ,  
Teṣveva yogasamsiddhāḥ gāmiṣyanti parām gatim  
Yasmin kalpe tu yat proktam purāṇam Brahmanā purā  
Tasya tasya tu mātmyam Tat svarūpeṇa varṇyate.*

“In the Tāmāsa kalpas (or days of Brahmā), the greatness of Agni or Śiva is narrated, in the Rājasa kalpas, the greatness of Brahmā is delineated as high. But in the Sāttvika kalpas, the greatness of Hari is portrayed as being very high. It is only in those

Kalpas that people acquire perfection in Yoga and attain the Supreme Goal (of Salvation)."

"Thus according to the nature of the Kalpa in which a particular Purāṇa was expounded by Brahmā, the greatness of that particular deity (having as predominant one or other of the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas or Tamas) is described."

Another Purāṇa declares:

*Sāttvikeṣu ca sarveṣu viṣṇor-māhātmyam iṣyate.*

"The greatness of Viṣṇu is described in all the Sāttvika Purāṇas (without exception)."

The second and the never-failing test by which the nature of a Purāṇa can be determined is the way in which the Purāṇa begins. In a Sāttvika purāṇa, the disciple, who has a thirst for knowledge, goes to a master (Ācārya) who is steeped in learning and the practice of religious rites and who has also realized God. He pays his obeisance to the Master and respectfully expresses his desire to know the Ultimate Truth. He puts questions to the master which are of a general nature—questions like the following: 'Which is the highest Truth? What is the greatest Means? And which is the Supreme Goal?' The teacher, who is interested only in the good of his disciple and has no desire for fame, lucre or honour, imparts to the deserving pupil the knowledge about the Ultimate Truth. The reply will be specific so that there will be no room for any doubt or misconception in the mind of the Śiṣya. For instance, Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme God, Meditation on Him is the means and so on. Thus in a Sāttvika purāṇa the question is in a general way and the reply is specific. It can be seen that the opening scene in all Sāttvika purāṇas is set in this manner.

By way of illustration we shall give the opening set-up in two or three works.

### 58. An example of a Sāttvika purāṇa

Now let us apply it to Viṣṇu purāṇa and see how it satisfies the test.

Other Purāṇas also accept the validity of Viṣṇu Purāṇa. For instance, Liṅga purāṇa says firstly that Viṣṇu purāṇa teaches the

means for the attainment of all the *Puruṣārthas* or the goals of human endeavour. Secondly it speaks in glowing terms about sage *Parāśara*, the author of *Viṣṇu purāṇa*. It says while referring to his birth that it was really an incarnation (*Avatāra*). It again declares that Sage *Parāśara* was in possession of that knowledge of the reality of the Highest Divinity which he had obtained from *Vasiṣṭha* and *Pulastya* as a boon bestowed upon him. *Liṅga purāṇa* also confirms the fundamental doctrines taught by *Viṣṇu purāṇa*.

The more important and the crucial test to determine that *Viṣṇu purāṇa* is a *Sāttvika purāṇa* is the mode of its opening. Let us see how it begins. It is early morning. Sage *Parāśara* has just finished his daily morning ablutions and rites, and is in his hermitage absorbed in meditation. *Maitreya*, another sage, comes to him with a thirst for knowledge. He prostrates before *Parāśara* and submits in all humility that he has come in quest of right knowledge. Being encouraged by the kind disposition of the great Sage, *Maitreya* proceeds to put some questions so that the master may know his requirements. *Maitreya* says: "I wish to hear from you, O Thou, the knower of Religion and Duty, how this world came into existence and what will become of it again. What does this world consist of? Revered One, whence did come all this movable and immovable creation? How and where was it hidden and into what will it be absorbed?" In short *Maitreya* wants to know by means of these questions and others about the Highest Reality which is the cause of the Universe and how It is to be worshipped and realized, and also about the nature of the world which is the object of creation, preservation and destruction.

On hearing these questions, the all-knowing Sage *Parāśara* first bows to the Divine Lord *Viṣṇu* who is the Supreme Deity and the Ruler of all. Then he proceeds to say in reply: "The World came into existence from the Will of *Viṣṇu* and it is altogether existent therein. *Viṣṇu* is the cause of the preservation and destruction of the Universe. The world is *Viṣṇu* Himself, because all creation, movable and immovable is pervaded by Him. All this has *Viṣṇu* for its soul and nothing can exist without Him. Hence as being the *Ātmā* of all, *Viṣṇu* is the only Reality and all other things exist as His body. *Viṣṇu* again is the Supreme Goal of attainment, and the means for it is exclusive meditation on Him." All this is quite in accordance with the teachings of the *Vecas* the amplifica-

tion and confirmation of which is the object of a Purāṇa. Therefore Viṣṇu purāṇa can be accepted as authoritative and can be deemed a Sāttvika purāṇa.

It will be seen that all the questions of Maitreya are in a general way. They show that he is in search of the Ultimate Truth and not interested in any particular deity or object. It will also be seen that the reply of Parāśara is of a specific nature since he declares Viṣṇu is the Supreme Deity and the Supreme Cause. Such is the scheme of opening of a Sāttvika purāṇa—the question in a general nature thus—‘which is the cause?’, and the answer is in regard to a specific deity thus—‘Viṣṇu is the Supreme Deity.’

This can be contrasted with the opening chapters of Purāṇas of another variety. By way of illustration we shall take up Liṅga purāṇa. The sages in Naimiśāraṇya go to Sūta Paurāṇika and request him to narrate to them a Purāṇa which will describe the greatness of Liṅga. Though the Sūta Paurāṇika knows all the Purāṇas and knows that Viṣṇu is the Supreme Deity and the Ultimate Reality, he does not speak about Him. He proceeds to describe how Liṅga also has its own greatness and how it has got to be worshipped for the realization of desires; since the sages are interested in the worship of Liṅga and want to know only about it. This is their request to the Suta:

*Tasmāt bhavantam pricchāmaḥ  
sūta! paurāṇika! adya tu,  
Purāṇam samhitām paṇyām  
liṅgamāhātmyasamyutām.*

Here the question is not in a general way, but in regard to a particular object, namely Liṅga, and naturally the answer also is in the same manner about the particular object—Liṅga. There is not the spirit of enquiry about the Ultimate Truth and the Supreme Godhead in the sages then which is the criterion in the case of a Sāttvika purāṇa; and the Teacher Sūta also restricts himself to a narration of the greatness of the object they are eager to know. This is quite in accordance with the maxim that a Teacher should not begin to teach all he knows, but should limit himself to the topic about which the students want to know and which will be suited to their equipment.

Again, there are passages in the *Liṅga purāṇa* which are mutually contradictory. For instance, in one place Rudra declares that Brahmā was born out of the right part of his body and Viṣṇu from the left. In another place it is stated that Śiva takes his birth from the anger of Viṣṇu and is enveloped by the quality of Tamas and that Brahmā who is covered by Rajoguṇa is born out of the favour of Viṣṇu. Though the two statements are mutually contradictory, the former is at variance with the teachings of the Vedas and so not valid, whereas the latter is in consonance with the Vedas which declare that Viṣṇu is the Supreme Deity and all beings including Brahmā and Rudra are created by Him.

It is true that Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa were born in this world as sons of Daśaratha and Vasudeva. But it is nowhere stated that Daśaratha and Vasudeva are Supreme Realities because of that. The births of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are incarnations of Śrī Viṣṇu proceeding out of Their own free will and they are not subject to the influence of Karma.

Thus a Purāṇa like the Śrī Viṣṇu purāṇa is Sātvika because of its unprejudiced and non-sectarian approach to the subject, and also because of the treatment which is quite in consonance with the Vedas. Hence its authoritativeness.

### 59. *Itihāsa (Epic) and its Validity*

It has been pointed out by adducing several reasons that Śrī Viṣṇu purāṇa is Sātvika by nature and therefore authoritative. Now we shall proceed to establish the authoritativeness in regard to another branch of Literature which goes by the name of Itihāsa (Epic). The literal meaning of the word 'Itihāsa' is 'Thus indeed it was'. The Itihāsa gets its name as such, because the stories narrated in it are all true and based on facts. There are two works that come under this class, namely Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. Rāmāyaṇa, as all know, deals with the story of Śrī Rāma, that illustrious scion of the Solar Dynasty (Sūryavaṁśa), and Mahābhārata narrates the story of the Pāṇḍavas the descendants of the Lunar Dynasty (Candravaṁśa). Both of them are declared to be Sātvika and have been very popular ever since their production. They have been cited as authority by Law-givers and their stories have been incorporated in other Purāṇas. They have

served as source-books for the later poets and dramatists in the composition of their poems and dramas.

First we shall take up Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa, the work of Vālmīki the Ādikavi—the first and foremost poet—and examine its opening section to find out if it can be called Sāttvika. Vālmīki was a great sage and he had himself performed severe penance. He was actuated by a desire to know about the ideal man in the world. Nārada, was well-known for his austerities and meditation, learning and the imparting of it. Vālmīki approached Nārada and after respectfully saluting him said that he had come to him with a desire for knowledge. He expressed what he wanted to know in the form of a series of questions as follows: “O Revered Sage! Who is that person in this world now that is possessed of merits and of valour? Who is he that knows the virtues of others and remembers their help? Who is the man of truthful words and firm determination? Who is that person before whose anger in battle even the gods tremble?” By means of these questions Vālmīki wanted to know about that one man who was above all because of his qualities and who earned the love and admiration of all.

As Vālmīki reeled off the questions one by one, Nārada was reminded of that one man who possessed all the qualities enumerated by Vālmīki and who therefore answered the description perfectly. For a moment he was lost in meditation on him. Then Nārada, collecting himself, said with a glow in his face, “Well Vālmīki, here is that man, Rāma, by name. He has taken his birth in the race of the Ikṣvākus. Listen to me, I shall tell you all about him.” Nārada, thereupon, proceeded to narrate the story of Rāma, who was then a man, but who was really the incarnation of Viṣṇu. That was how Vālmīki came to know about Rāma whose story he described in the great Epic, Rāmāyaṇa.

It will be seen that all the questions of Vālmīki are framed in a general way thus: “Who is that man of merits, who is that person of valour?” and so on. Vālmīki was actuated by a spirit of enquiry and was eager to know the ideal man from the all-knowing Nārada. He was not influenced by partiality towards any particular individual and did not want that that person should be highly spoken of. The answer of Sage Nārada, on the contrary, is specific. He declares most emphatically that Śrī Rāma was the one man in

the world then who possessed all lovable qualities and who answered the description given by Valmiki. Since Rāma was an incarnation of Viṣṇu who is the Supreme Reality as taught by the Vedas, Rāmāyaṇa that follows the teachings of the Vedas, is a work of Sāttvika nature and can be accepted as authoritative.

### 60. *Mahābhārata and its Validity*

Now we shall proceed to examine Mahābhārata, another Epic. But here instead of taking the entire Epic for examination, we shall restrict ourselves to one of the numerous episodes found in it and show how it is an admirable illustration of a Sāttvika work. The subject of our test now is Śrī Viṣṇu Sahasranāma in the Ānuśāsanika Parva of Mahābhārata.

It is an undisputed fact that the term Sahasranāma, which means a 'Thousand Names' is usually taken to refer to Viṣṇu Sahasranāma, the Thousand Names of Viṣṇu. This shows the universal popularity of this work which is made use of by all irrespective of their persuasion or attachment. On the other hand the thousand names of other deities like Śiva, Lalitā and others are always referred to by their specific names as Śiva-Sahasranāma, Lalitā-Sahasranāma and so on. It is also well-known that the chanting of Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma is prescribed as a means for the realization of all kinds of desires—be they desires for worldly pleasures or Heavenly Bliss. The experience of people from early times proves that it is true. Phala-śruti or the section towards the end which declares the benefits of chanting the Sahasranāma clearly states this. There are passages in other Purāṇas also which prescribe the chanting of Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma as a sure means for the attainment of all ends. Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa, in his prose romance *Kādambarī* by name, describes that Viṣṇu Sahasranāma was being chanted in the lying-in-chamber of the Queen as a panacea to ward off evil spirits.

The scheme of Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma at its opening proves that it belongs to the Sāttvika class of works. To explain: The great Mahābhārata War was over. Bhīṣma, the great warrior, was lying on a bed of arrows waiting for an auspicious time for shedding his body. He was an inexhaustible mine of all knowledge and wisdom. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who knew that with the death of Bhīṣma there would

be an eclipse of all knowledge, did not want that it should happen. So he commanded Yudhiṣṭhira to go to the bed-side of Bhīṣma so that he could receive instruction from him. Yudhiṣṭhira accordingly went to the place where Bhīṣma was lying and after saluting him requested him to enlighten him on the different Dharmas. Bhīṣma was pleased and began to expound Rāja Dharma, Strī Dharma, Mokṣa Dharma and so on. Yudhiṣṭhira continued to listen to the flow of the knowledge of the pure and purifying Dharmas from Bhīṣma and it only increased his desire to learn more.

Yudhiṣṭhira said to Bhīṣma, "Revered Sir, you spoke to me about various Dharmas. But I wish to know from you this: Which is the Supreme Deity in this world? Which is the highest goal of attainment? By the praise and worship of which again will a man achieve all auspicious things? Above all, which, in your opinion, is the highest of all Dharmas? Which is the means by which a man can attain the release from the bondage of this earth?"

Such was the form of the questions of the wise Yudhiṣṭhira; and the reply of the all-knowing Bhīṣma was as follows: "Viṣṇu is the Supreme Deity. He is the Creator of all this Universe and at the time of deluge it disappears into Him. Viṣṇu is the Highest Goal of Attainment since He is the purest of the pure, most auspicious of the auspicious, and most shining of shining. **Bhaktiyoga** is the means by which those who are competent can attain Him. But in regard to the destitute, the chanting of the Thousand Names of Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma) is sufficient and it will grant all their desires. And in my considered opinion this is the greatest of all Dharmas." Then Bhīṣma proceeded to describe the Thousand Names of Śrī Viṣṇu which go to make the Viṣṇu Sahasranāma.

Thus in Sahasranāma also as in the case of all Sāttvika Purāṇas, the questions are all in a general form and the answers quite specific. The question is—'which is the Supreme Deity?' And the answer is —'Viṣṇu'. The subject here is quite in consonance with the teachings of the Vedas; and thus Viṣṇu-sahasranāma also is Sāttvika and is to be taken as authoritative.

Therefore, we have to examine the scheme of the opening section of a Purāṇa in the light of the rules prescribed above, and if



it satisfies the test, it is accepted as a Sāttvika purāṇa and taken as authoritative; otherwise it is not accepted. But if there are passages in other Purāṇas which are in accordance with the Vedas, such passages alone are accepted and the others are rejected as not meant for one who is after the highest goal in life.

Thus Śabda or Verbal Testimony which is the third and the last of the three Pramāṇas accepted by Viśiṣṭādvaita comprises the Vedas and their Six Auxiliaries or Saḍaṅgas as well as the Purāṇas and the Itihāsas which have their root in the Vedas.

### 61. Conclusion

Thus an attempt was made here to give in brief an exposition of the Viśiṣṭādvaita System of Philosophy propounded by Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Vedānta Deśika and other Ācāryas. The topic was dealt with under two broad divisions—*Prameya* (the objects of knowledge) and *Pramāṇa* (the Instruments of knowledge). The *Prameya* was divided under three heads—*Tattva* (Realities), *Hita* (Means of Attainment) and *Puruṣārtha* (Goal of Endeavour). The *Tattvas* are of three kinds—*Cetana* (the sentient being), *Acetana* (the non-sentient substance) and *Īśvara* the Lord. The *Cetanas* are divided into three classes—*Baddhas* (Souls in bondage), *Muktas* (Released Souls) and *Nityas* (Eternally free Angels). The *Baddhas* are subject to the law of Karma from beginningless time and take birth in this world to experience the fruit of their deeds, good and bad, in their previous births in one or other of the four species—god, man, animal or plants. The *Muktas* are those, who were once *Baddhas*, and who have attained Release by adopting the proper means of salvation. They are in the enjoyment of perfect Bliss in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha on a par with the Lord. The *Nityas* are those Eternal Angels like Ādiśeṣa, Garuḍa Viṣvaksena, who were never in contact with Karma and so who were never in bondage.

The *Acetana* was dealt with under three heads—*Triguṇa*, *Kāla* and *Śuddhasattva*. *Triguṇa* or *Prakṛti* is the Primordial Matter which evolves itself in the form of this material world. It is of twentyfour kinds, all having the three *Guṇas* called *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Kāla* is Time which is eternal and all-pervasive and serves as an auxiliary cause in the process of creation,

development and destruction of the world. Śuddhasattva is the Transcendent Matter which is self-luminous and blissful by nature. This is the substance out of which all the objects in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha and the bodies of Muktas, Nityas and Īśvara are constituted.

Īśvara is the Para Brahma or Paramātmā. He is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. He has all the pure and auspicious qualities and is free from all blemish. He is the one Ātmā of all other Cetanas and Acetanas which are supported and controlled by Him and which exist mainly for His purpose. Because of this, They are His bodies. He is the Supreme Cause of the Universe. He has five forms—Para, Vyūha, Vibhava (Incarnations like Rāma and Kṛiṣṇa), Hārda (the Subtle form in the heart) and Arcā (Consecrated Idols in temples and houses). Īśvara is the one Ultimate Deity which is the object of worship by all actions, and is the one final object connoted by all words. The Mantras of the Upanishads and the Hymns of the Ālvārs declare that the Divine Couple—Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa—together form the one Godhead and all other things are for their purpose. In short they live, move and have their being in The Divine Couple.

The knowledge of the Tattvas creates a desire for the attainment of Supreme Bliss and so one seeks the means (or Hita) for the same. Upāsanā or Bhakti-yoga is the direct means for it. One has to practise Karma-Yoga and Jñāna Yoga before one can take up Bhakti-Yoga. Karma-Yoga is the observance of all duties—obligatory—daily and occasional and also optional. But they must be performed with a spirit of non-attachment to the fruit and freedom from egoism. Being pleased with this discipline and mental disposition, the Lord blesses the person with the power to control his mind and other sense. Then the person proceeds to practise Jñāna-yoga (Realization of his own Ātmā). When this is achieved, he begins Bhakti-yoga, unceasing contemplation of the Lord with devotion and love. This is called Para-Bhakti which takes him on to the stage of Para-Jñāna (Momentary Realization of Paramātmā) and that again creates an intense longing in him to attain the Lord which is called Parama-Bhakti.

This Bhakti-yoga is a difficult process and only a few that are qualified can practise it. For those who are lacking in knowledge,

ability and high birth and so are incompetent, another way has been prescribed, viz., Prapatti. It is known as Nyāsa, Nikshepa and Śaraṇāgati. While practising it, a person must observe its five accessories—he will be agreeable to the Lord, he will not do anything disagreeable to Him, he is helpless, he must have Supreme faith in God and must pray for his protection. Once the self-surrender is made, there is nothing more to be done and the person begins to enjoy the Puruṣārtha even from then.

Puruṣārtha is the enjoyment of the Supreme Bliss and eternal service to the Lord, which is attained in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. Even here the Prapanna has a foretaste of it by service to God here and his devotees and leading a life free from mistakes. When the time of departure comes, the Lord takes him out of the body and escorts him in the Glowing Path of Archirādi and finally leads him to Vaikuṇṭha with due honours on the way. There he has happiness equal to that of the Lord and does everlasting service to Him.

Such was the scheme of the Prameya—object of knowledge. The next section was Pramāṇa (Instruments of knowledge). Knowledge is attained by the Pramāṇa which is of three kinds—Pratyakṣa (Perception), Anumāna (Inference) and Śabda (Verbal Testimony). Perceptual knowledge is generated by the sense-organs contacting the various substances, and inferential knowledge by a process of reasoning where the *hetu* or reason must be correct. The Vedas are the foremost among the Śabda-pramāṇa which deals with things that are beyond the Senses. Itihāsas and Sāttvika Purāṇas that are in consonance with Vedic teachings also come under the class of Śabda.

The knowledge acquired by a person with the help of these Pramāṇas helps him lead a virtuous life. That will earn for him the Grace of the Lord which will bestow on him the highest Bliss that one should strive for.

Thus we have dealt with the chief tenets of Viśiṣṭadvaita, the system based on the teachings of the Upanishads, the Brahma Sūtras and the Gītā. It was propounded by Sage Bodhāyana, Taṇka, Draviḍa and others. It was later established by Śrī Rāmānuja and strengthened by Śrī Vedānta Deśika. We hope our efforts here would create a desire in the readers to go to the original texts for further knowledge and enjoyment.

Śrī Deśika says that doubts are likely to arise in the minds of people about the Tattvaṣ and other things and it is essential that the doubts should be cleared. He has anticipated many such doubts in his several works and has also cleared them. God willing, we shall next deal with them in the form of questions and answers under the title '*Viśiṣṭādvaitic Catechism*'.





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